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SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD LITERATURE AFTER STALIN'S DEATH

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An abstract of

SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD LITERATURE AFTER STALIN'S DEATH

Prior to 1953 Soviet policies towards literature were characterized by change. Similarly, in the years following the death of Stalin a vacillating policy, manifesting itself in definite cycles consisting of successive stages of relaxing, tightening, and stabilizing controls, has been experienced in the literary field.

The first period of limited creative freedom during late 1953 and the first half of 1954 witnesssd the appearance of such books as I. Ehrenburg's The Thaw and V. Panova's The Seasons, both of which were considerable departures from typical Soviet writing of the past due to the fact that they placed such an emphasis on the darker aspects of Soviet life. These books and others similar incurred a storm of criticism and were instrumental in causing the Soviet Communist Party, through its spokesmen among the writers, to call for renewed vigilance against falling prey to harmful tendencies in writing. The end result of the Party-inspired pleas was a tightening

in literary policies. In 1955 the newly-introduced, more restrictive literary policy was strengthened and consolidated.

The year 1956 was monumental in a study of literary policies as it was marked by the second and greatest relaxation of controls. During this year, one of the most criticized books in the history of Soviet literature, Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone, was first published.

During the years 1957 and 1958 policies towards literature were again hardened as Party demands on writers increased; several factors motivated this change: the intelligentsia's part in the events in Poland and Hungary, the attacks on socialist realism, and the appearance of books too critical of various aspects of Soviet society. A trend towards more Party-mindedness made itself felt. V. Kochetov's novel, The Ershov Brothers, was of considerable significance at this time as, among other things, it expressed the Party's point of view on literature and opposed the more liberal attitudes which had been displayed by many intellectuals during 1956.

Soviet literary policies seem to be undergoing a period of stabilization at the present time, and, if the trend continues, a new period of relaxation, the first stage of a new cycle, can be expected in the future.

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CONTENTS

Preface

The purpose of this thesis is to shed some light on official Soviet policies in the literary field in the years following the death of Stalin through 1958, and to formulate a policy-pattern from the information obtained. Achieving this end necessitates discussing such things as purely political happenings, inasmuch as politics occupies a position of the first magnitude in Soviet society and has a direct or indirect bearing on all realms of activity in the Soviet Union; the literary controls extant in the pre-1953 history of Soviet literature, an aid to understanding post-Stalin policy changes, and some important, controversial or non-controversial, literary works of recent years.

The thesis' conclusions, to the effect that literary policies during the post-Stalin period have undergone two cycles with each involving a periodic relaxation, tightening, and stabilization, are arrived at in the following manner: a discussion of events and pronouncements affecting literature is combined with a review of certain selected Soviet books of the period, books which have

either been repeatedly condemned as lacking in socialist realism characteristics, or have been held up as fine examples of this method. A two-sided approach of this kind has the advantage of simultaneously following policy developments in the Soviet literary sphere while analyzing concrete examples of Soviet literary work.

This work does not pretend to be a comprehensive and exhaustive study of the subject. Some limitations were necessary due to the wide scope of the subject. For example, although this thesis applies to Soviet policies with respect to literature in general, only Soviet Russian prose works, as opposed to literary productions of the other Soviet nationalities, have been used as examples. Similarly, references to developments and criticisms of the specific books used have, with the exception of the first and last chapters, been taken almost entirely from Soviet sources. In this connection, the author owes a considerable debt to the compilers of the Current Digest of the Soviet Press which has been relied on, in the

great majority of cases, for essential information appearing in many chief Soviet publications. Specific books of the Soviet writers I. Ehrenburg, V. Panova, and V. Dudintsev, illustrating undesirable tendencies, and others of the writers V. Kochetov and V. Ovechkin, manifesting the correct Party approach, also provide a major portion of the material used in this work.

Inasmuch as such fields as Soviet politics, economics, and history are usually of more interest to the student of Soviet affairs than is literature, it is the author's belief that the causes, changes, and general workings of Soviet policy in the literary field together with a first-hand account of some important literary works, will be both of value and of interest to the reader.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Any attempt to understand the policies and demands of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union towards literature during the period following Stalin's death requires some knowledge of Soviet literature and its position with respect to the Party. Therefore I propose at the outset to trace the history of Soviet literature from its inception in 1917 up to 1953 and to concentrate specifically on the extent and development of Party controls on literature during these years. Soviet literature has always been under some official control. From the initial period of relative disinterest and non-intervention, the Party has gradually involved itself deeper and deeper into literary affairs and has periodically relaxed and tightened the controls along the way to the point where literature is now considered to be a valuable weapon of the Party in the front line of the ideological struggle.

Unlike literature in the West, which in many cases has followed the slogan "art for art's sake", Soviet

literature has inherited the traditions of the great Russian philosopher-critics of the nineteenth century, Bielinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobroliubov, who believed that literature should be a weapon of the enlightened intelligentsia to be used in agitating for better conditions for the downtrodden masses; Chernyshevsky stated:

> In countries where intellectual and social life has reached a high development, there exists a division of labor between various branches of intellectual activity, but of these we [the Russians] only know one--literature. Therefore, however we may discuss our literature in comparison with others, nevertheless in our mind it plays a more important role than either French, German or English literatures play in that of their peoples; and upon it are placed more responsibilities than on any other literature.[1]

The Russian writer felt he was morally obligated to use his pen as an instrument in bringing about social change, and it is true of the prerevolutionary Russian writer that he, to a relatively greater degree than was the case with his contemporaries in the West, concerned himself with

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1 As cited in George Reavey, Soviet Literature To-day (London, 1946), p. 27.

pressing social and political problems and invariably glorified as his hero the "downtrodden little man". Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Chekhov in their time all were largely concerned with social conditions.

In 1905 Lenin wrote one of his few brief articles concerning literature's place and duty in the society which would follow the overthrow of the tsardom. This now very famous and oft-quoted article "Party Organization and Party Literature" significantly followed the same line taken by the philosopher-critics concerning the definite role and moral obligation of the writer, and, while heaping scorn on bourgeois literature's claim to be free, Lenin added that literature could not be neutral in the class struggle but must be closely tied to the proletarian class and reflect its interests:

> As a counterbalance to bourgeois ideals, as a counterbalance to bourgeois owner's, shopkeeper's printing, as a counterbalance to bourgeois literary careerism and individualism, to "gentlemenly anarchism" and the pursuit of profits--the socialist proletariat should put forward the principle of Party literature, develop this principle and put it into practise in the fullest and purest form possible. ...It

> is impossible to live in society and be free from society. The freedom of a bourgeois writer, of an artist, of an actress is only a masked (or hypocritically disguised) dependence on the money-bag, on bribery, on subsistence.
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> And we socialists unveil this hypocrisy, we tear off the false fronts--not in order to obtain non-class literature and art (this will be possible only in a socialist classless society) but in order to contrast really free literature, openly tied with the proletariat, to the literature hypocritically free, but in fact, literature bound up with the bourgeoisie.[2]

Following the failure of the 1905 Revolution, the disillusionment, which resulted among a large segment of the intelligentsia, caused an escapist attitude towards social problems. Many writers turned to symbolism, which utilized mystical, exotic, and fanciful themes and propounded the view "art for art's sake"; others were advocates of ornamentalism, an embellishing type of writing, which relied for effect on its striking manner of narration. However, although it had lost its monopoly in literature as far back as 1890, a strain of realist literature with a

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2 V. I. Lenin, "Partiinaia organizatsia i partiinaia literatura, " Sochineniia, 3rd ed. (Moscow, 1929), VIII, 387 and 389.

social purpose persisted up to the Bolshevik Revolution.

After the October Revolution in 1917 the history of Soviet literature can be divided into roughly six periods.

The period of War Communism (1917-21) saw the flourishing of the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organization (Proletcult), which was organized in the period just before the revolution. It believed that, according to Marxism, the culture of any given society was the reflection of its ruling class. In the case where the means of production were controlled by the bourgeoisie, the culture in existence was bourgeois culture and therefore, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletarian dictatorship, a new proletarian culture would have to be created from the ground up. A significant belief of the Proletcultists was that all the cultural treasures, accumulated in the preceding thousands of years of human development, should be discarded. This view was opposed by Lenin. Another view which found disfavour with the Bolshevik leader was the Proletcult

belief that the cultural sphere should be autonomous of the economic and political spheres, that is, of the government and Party. Lenin quickly snuffed out this attempt at autonomy for newly-born Soviet literature when he forced the Proletcultists to declare themselves under the authority of the People's Commissariat of Education (Narkompros); in his resolution which he succeeded in forcing on the reluctant Proletcultists, Lenin stated:

> Marxism won for itself its world-wide historical importance as an ideology of the revolutionary proletariat in that it, Marxism, in no way discarded the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, but, on the contrary, mastered and worked over everything that was of value in the more than two thousand year development of human thought and culture. ...
>
> Unyieldingly standing on this principled point of view, the All-Russian Congress of Proletcult rejects in a most decisive manner as theoretically untrue and harmful in practice all attempts to invent its own particular culture, to lock itself in its own isolated organizations, to demarcate the spheres of work of Narkompros and Proletcult and similar [groups] or to establish "autonomy" of Prolecult within the institutions of Narkompros and others similar. On the contrary, the Congress charges as an unconditional obligation of all organizations of Proletcult to examine themselves completely as subsidiary organs of the network

> of institutions of Narkompros and to implement under the general leadership of Soviet rule (especially Narkompros) and the Russian Communist Party its tasks, as a part of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship.[3]

This resolution is significant in that it marks the first involvement of the Party in literature and makes it known in no uncertain terms that although literature was to be given considerable freedom, nevertheless it was always to remember that it was subordinate to the State organs which could step in and exercise their authority at any given time. This resolution was an omen of things to come.

During this same period of War Communism various offshoots of the Proletcult occurred. One of the main ones was Kuznitsa (the Smithy), a group of ardent revolutionaries whose revolutionary emotion, as Brown states in his book on Soviet proletarian literature, "not only arises from the contemplation of the coming victory of the world proletariat, but attempts to go beyond the bounds

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3 Ibid., XXV, 409-410.

of earthly life and include the universe itself in the revolutionary movement of which they felt themselves a part".[4] Another was the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP), which was formed in 1920 at a Smithy-organized conference of proletarian writers from many parts of the country. Later, the main part of the Smithy group called for the dissolution of VAPP as they believed it better to limit membership in the writers' organization to those who had, to a considerable degree, studied literary and art principles of aesthetics.[5]

This period was characterized by considerable freedom of literary creation. Only openly counterrevolutionary writing was prohibited. The Bolsheviks were locked in a life-and-death struggle with the Whites and interventionists in the Civil War. Thus, with the exception of Lenin's aforementioned resolution, they concerned themselves little about literary developments at this time.

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4 Edward J. Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928-32 (New York, 1953), p. 12.

5 Ibid., p. 13.

The implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1921 coincided with the start of the second period of Soviet literature; this phase, which most western scholars consider the most free for literary creativity during the whole history of the Soviet regime, ended in 1928 with the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan. All types of literary schools, holding widely divergent views on politics as well as literature, competed for dominance in this period.

The Serapion Brothers were proponents of the theory, "art for art's sake," which was later condemned as bourgeois; their view was that:

> Each of us has his ideology, his political convictions, each paints his hut to suit himself. Thus in life and thus in our stories, tales and dramas. We all together, we the Brotherhood--demand only one thing: that the tone not be false. That we may believe in the work, whatever colour it may have...[6]

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6 William Edgerton, "The Serapion Brothers: an Early Soviet Controversy," American Slavic and East European Review, No. 1 (February, 1949), VIII, 51-52.

It is interesting to note that the Serapion Brothers included such well-known Soviet writers as Konstantin Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov, Veniamin Kaverin, and Mikhail Zoshchenko; writers such as these, who did not belong to the Communist Party but at the same time were not hostile to the aims and purposes of the new Soviet regime, were labelled as "fellow-travellers" by Leon Trotsky, and this name has survived among students of Soviet literature to this day.

The October group, which supplied the leadership of VAPP, was organized in 1922 and was partly composed of those writers of the Smithy who opposed limiting membership in the proletarian writers' associations. The main body of the Smithy supported this limitation. Other proletarian writers also joined the October group. Later the members of this group became known as the On Guardists, a title which they derived from their literary publication, Na Postu (On Guard). All of the On Guardists were young Communist Party members, inexperienced in literary matters;

nevertheless they "proposed that their organization should, under strict Party guidance, become the administrative center of literary life".[7] The animosity between the On Guardists and the fellow-travellers intensified and the Party finally entered the dispute. Its decision was surprisingly against the On Guardists. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks), of July 1, 1925, "On the policy of the Party in the field of belles-lettres" stated:

> ...the Party should declare itself in favour of the free competition of various groups and tendencies in this province. Any other solution of the problem would be an official, bureaucratic pseudo-solution. In the same way it is inadmissible to legalize by a decree the monopoly of the literary printing business by any one group or literary organization. While morally and materially supporting proletarian and proletarian-peasant literature, and aiding the fellow-travelers, the Party cannot offer a monopoly to any of these groups, even the one most proletarian in its ideology. For this would be to destroy proletarian literature itself.[8]

Although the proletarian writers were rebuffed in their

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7 Brown, op. cit., p. 219.

8 Ibid., p. 239.

attempt to dominate completely in the literary field, nevertheless, as Brown states, the Party assured the proletarian writers of material and moral support, giving them to understand that their "hour of glory" was not far off.[9]

The First Five-Year Plan for the industrialization of the country and the collectivization of agriculture ushered in the third period of Soviet literature, the period in which the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) dominated. Writers, as well as all Soviet workers, were mobilized for the tasks of the Five-Year Plan. Writers' groups were formed in the factories. The subject matter of their works was to be the heroic workers and the deeds they performed in fulfilling the plan. The Central Committee's resolution "On the serving of the mass reader with literature" on December 28, 1928, stated that all organizations serving the mass reader were to be strengthened, the subject matter of literary compositions

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9 Ibid., p. 44.

was to consist mainly of Marxist-Leninist Party history, technical information on production, self-educational, scientific material and current political themes; however, the most interesting part of the resolution obliged publishing houses to increase the publication of these books, to enroll qualified Communists [as opposed to fellow-travellers] as authors, and to set up a study of reader demand and interest, and library circles of worker and peasant critics.[10] As RAPP now had the official backing of the Party, its attacks on the non-proletarian writers increased. Stalin would seem to have played a moderating role in happenings at this time; in a letter answering Bill'-Belotserkovsky's call for the banning of fellow-traveller literature, Stalin writes:

> Of course, it is very easy to "criticize" and to demand the banning of non-proletarian literature. But what is easiest must not be considered the best. It is not a matter of banning but of step by step ousting the old and new non-proletarian trash from the stage by competing against it, by creating genuine, interesting, artistic Soviet plays capable of

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10 Ibid., pp. 241-242.

> replacing it. Competition is a big and serious matter, because only in an atmosphere of competition can we arrive at the formation and crystallization of our proletarian literature.[11]

Brown's opinion concerning the RAPP period is at some variance with the view held by most scholars of Soviet literature. These hold that this period was one of intense regimentation of writers in the service of the Party in order to glorify the achievements of the Five-Year Plan. RAPP, in their view, was the instrument of the Party in achieving this end. However, Brown believes that RAPP's attitude was ambiguous to the extent that while claiming to be working under the Party's supervision, it preferred independence from direct control, especially with regard to style and content.[12]

The death-knell sounded for RAPP on April 23, 1932, and the fourth period in Soviet Russian literature was born when the Central Committee passed its resolution which

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11 J. V. Stalin, "Letter to Bill'-Belotserkovsky," Works, trans. anon., (Moscow, 1954), XI, 343.

12 Brown, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

dissolved the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers and united all writers "upholding the platform of the Soviet power and striving to participate in Socialist construction" in the Union of Soviet Writers, which significantly contained a Party faction.[13] This Union of Soviet Writers has been in existence up to the present time. The Party declared that it had dissolved RAPP because this organization was preventing the growth of literary creation and, through its hostile and overbearing attitude towards the fellow-travellers, was threatening to alienate them from the Soviet system, with which they basically sympathized.[14]

The significant thing about the newly-formed Union of Soviet Writers was the presence in it of a Party faction. Students of Soviet affairs know the tremendous authority exercised by the Party in all walks of life in the Soviet Union and that, before acceptance into the Party is granted, the candidate must prove his unquestioning loyalty to the

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13 Ibid., p. 201.

14 Ibid., p. 200.

cause and take an active and "aggressive" role in seeing that Party directives are implemented. In this light, one can naturally assume that the Party faction on the Union would henceforth be the Party's "watchdog" in the literary field and make certain that the Party's wishes in literary affairs would be carried out.

In the interval between the forced dissolution of RAPP and the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 many conferences of writers took place. Gorky, who had returned from abroad, took a most active role in the proceedings. A new literary method was formulated prior to its official presentation to the Congress--the method of socialist realism. Andrei Zhdanov, member of the powerful Party Politburo, announced this henceforth only acceptable method of literary creativity to the Congress in the following words:

> Comrade Stalin called our writers the engineers of human souls. What does this mean? What obligations does this title place on you?
>
> This means, firstly, to know life, in order to know how to depict it correctly in artistic works, to depict it not in an

> academic way, not in a moribund form, not simply as "objective reality," but to depict reality in its revolutionary development.
>
> In addition to this, the task of the moral reformation and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism must be combined with the correct and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal. Such a method of artistic literature and literary criticism is the one we call the method of socialist realism.[15]

It is necessary to analyse this definition in order to understand just what was expected of the Soviet writer in the future. On the one hand, life or reality of a socialist society (as opposed to bourgeois society) must be depicted in its constantly changing state, while the subjects or events portrayed should be shown in concrete, not abstract, terms; the descriptions of life should also take into account that which has gone before and that which will be as well as that which is. On the other hand, the writer must educate the reader in the socialist spirit; he must stand "on Party positions" (partiinost'); he must

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15 Andrei A. Zhdanov, "Sovetskaia literatura--samaia ideinaia, samaia peredovaia literatura v mire," (Pamphlet) (Moscow, 1953), p. 8. This is a reprint of Zhdanov's speech as reported in Pravda, August 20, 1934.

be partial to the Party's interests and inculcate them in the reader and must not merely describe or "photograph" people and events "objectively". In order for the writer to impress his message upon the reader the work must possess national characteristics (narodnost'); that is, it must be close and accessible to all the people and must be written in clear, popular, intelligible language.

Foreseeing the criticism that foreign writers would level at the method of socialist realism, especially for its avowed partiinost', Zhdanov continued:

> Our Soviet literature is not afraid of accusations of partiality. Yes, Soviet literature is biased, because there is not and there cannot be non-class, non-biased, as it were, apolitical literature in the epoch of the class struggle....[16]

Zhdanov concluded his militant speech to the Congress with the call for writers to reflect the achievements of socialism in their works, to better their craftsmanship, to organize the people's consciousness in the socialist

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16 Ibid., p. 8.

spirit, and be in the forefront of the fighters for a classless socialist society.[17] In addition to the control by the Party faction within the Union of Soviet Writers itself as mentioned previously, the First Congress set up the administrative organs for the Union and elected its officials. The president and secretary were linked to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee, which, according to Reavey, "is the body that exercises ultimate powers of initiation and control of policy in the world of art as a whole".[18]

The decisions of the Congress resulted in a general impoverishment of literature. Writers were made to conform to a rigid Party standard. For transgressions, which may not always have been of a purely literary nature, a large number of Soviet writers fell victim to the purges and their works were withdrawn from publication and circulation. (Following Khrushchev's attack on Stalin in 1956, some of these writers have been rehabilitated and their writings

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17 Ibid., p. 11.

18 Reavey, op. cit., p. 39.

are beginning to reappear). Themes, having little in common with the revolutionary development of life, were introduced following the rehabilitation of Russia's old national heroes and the rise of nationalism in the country in the late thirties. This radical change in policy, which found its reflection in the literary as in all realms of activity, was instigated and nourished by the Party.

The fifth period in the history of Soviet literature coincided with the years of the Great Patriotic War (1941-45). During the initial two years of the war, when the Soviet regime was in desperate straits, more freedom was granted writers in an effort to play on the national loyalties of the peoples of the USSR and drum up popular support for the war effort. However, towards the end of the war, when the outcome was no longer in doubt, a notable tightening of control began to make itself felt.

The sixth period in the history of Soviet literature officially appeared on the scene when Zhdanov made his

famous condemnation of the editorial boards of the Leningrad periodicals Zvezda (The Star) and Leningrad and censured the writers Mikhail Zoshchenko and Anna Akhmatova. This speech marked a return to strict ideological militancy in the field of belles-lettres; this theme had receded into the background in favour of nationalism during the war. Accusing Zoshchenko and Akhmatova of espousing the bourgeois theory "art for art's sake," Zhdanov declared:

> Our literature is not a private undertaking, taking into account the satisfaction of the various tastes of the literary market. We are under no obligation at all to leave a place in our literature for tastes and morals, not having anything in common with the morals and qualities of Soviet people. ...These works [of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova] could only sow gloom, a fall in spirit, pessimism, a striving to evade the vital questions of social life, to withdraw from the wide road of social life and activity into a narrow little world of personal experiences.[19]

After severely castigating Zoshchenko and Akhmatova by

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19 Andrei A. Zhdanov, "Doklad o zhurnalakh 'Zvezda i Leningrad'," (Pamphlet) (Moscow, 1952), p. 12. This is a reprint of Zhdanov's speech as reported in Pravda, September 21, 1946.

recalling their dark past, the persistency of their bourgeois outlook, and their dissatisfaction with the Soviet order of things, Zhdanov levelled his anger at the editorial boards of the two errant periodicals and asked:

> In what lies the root of these mistakes and deficiencies?
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> ...Many of our writers and those who work in the position of responsible editors or occupy important posts in the Union of Writers, think that politics is a matter for the government, a matter for the Central Committee. As regards literary people, it is not their business to occupy themselves with politics. A man has written well, artistically, beautifully--then it is necessary to set it [his work] in motion, regardless of the fact that there are rotten places in it, which disorientate our youth, poison it. We demand that our comrades, the leaders of literature, just as those writing, be guided by that, without which Soviet rule could not live, that is, by politics, in order for us to educate the youth not in a spirit of contempt and lack of principle but in a spirit of daring and revolutionary character. ...
>
> Soviet writers and all our ideological workers are now positioned on the front line of fire, because in the conditions of peaceful development, the tasks of the ideological front, and in the first instance, of literature, are not removed, but, on the contrary, grow. The people, the State and the Party want not the

> withdrawal of literature from contemporaneity, but the active intrusion of literature into all spheres of the Soviet way of life.[20]

The renewed militancy had its effect on the literature of the post-war period, which, in the opinion of many, found itself in the sorriest and most pathetic state in its history. The stories in this period were characterized by the presence of stereotyped plots and characters. The hero was usually a Party secretary, who bore a marked resemblance to Stalin, a man who could solve all sorts of problems, from technical to personal; in short, he was a giant who stood out above the rest in such qualities as genius, tact, understanding, and fortitude. In his book on Soviet literature, published in 1951, the well-known critic V. Ermilov states:

> Our literature teaches one to express the aggressive character of the hero of our time, the builder of communism ever deeper. In this is one of the basic traditions of the literature of socialist realism.[21]

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20 Ibid., pp. 17 and 30.

21 V. Ermilov, Izbrannye raboty v trekh tomakh (Moscow, 1956), III, 321.

He was perhaps referring to the all-knowing character which I have just described.

The so-called "no-conflict" theory had its advocates who held the view that all conflicts and contradictions in Soviet life had disappeared, that there were no good and bad, which could lead to conflict, but only varying shades of good. These writers wrote works in which all aspects of Soviet life were painted in rosy colours. Later, after Stalin's death, this "no-conflict" theory fell into disgrace, and those who had been guided by it in their writings were accused of having been "varnishers of reality".

During the post-war period the two main heresies that a writer could fall prey to were declared to be bourgeois nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Bourgeois nationalism in effect applied to all peoples within the Soviet Union with the exception of the Great Russians. It meant the praising of old national heroes and their idealization in works of art. For example,

a Russian writer could write on the lives of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great and idealize these tsars all he wished without incurring criticism and probably even receiving praise for his efforts; on the other hand, a Soviet Ukrainian writer would not dare to idealize Ivan Mazepa, the Ukrainian hetman who fought to prevent the subjugation of his country by Peter the Great, because he would be labelled a bourgeois nationalist. This policy tied in with the general intensification of Russian nationalism, rampant in the Soviet Union in the later years of Stalin's life, which was veiled under the slogan of Soviet patriotism. In essence, it meant that, although all the peoples in the Union were equal, the Russian people was the first among equals and therefore should be given its due by a patriotic Soviet non-Russian.

Cosmopolitanism was referred to as the conscious negation and disregard for one's own cultural heritage and the slavish subservience to things foreign. A Russian writer was susceptible to this phenomenon if, for instance, he criticised Peter the Great as a tyrant and autocrat. He was expected to appreciate and treasure the

past heritage of his own people.

In order for the reader to better assess the state in which Soviet literature found itself in the period immediately prior to Stalin's death in 1953, one must consider not only the officially condemned deviations such as bourgeois nationalism and cosmopolitanism, but also ascertain the literary qualities which were praised and considered positive. Therefore a brief consideration of a typical example of the works created in this period of zhdanovshchina will prove to be of benefit.

V. Kochetov's Zhurbiny (The Zhurbins) is a novel which illustrates what the Party expected of a writer during this period. The Zhurbins was regarded as praiseworthy by the Party and its spokesmen in the literary field because of the fact that it exhibited various desirable features; these are summarized in the following paragraph.

The novel strictly adheres to the socialist realism method. Partiinost' is evident throughout the story inasmuch as the positive characters identify themselves with

the aims and purposes of the Party and the Soviet State. The theme deals almost entirely with work. The characters are depicted mostly in a favourable light and the heroes are contemporary Soviet shock-workers in a shipbuilding yard. The local Party organizer, though not one of the major characters, is nevertheless given a prominent place. He is a man who possesses no faults or deficiencies, a man of deep wisdom and integrity who stands, as it were, above the ordinary people in his capabilities, and who is consulted on all important matters; Kochetov describes him in the following manner:

> Zhukov had long since got the run of the shipyard and the people there; he had become one of them. He was an unusual man. Despite his 50 years he seemed not to grow old but to remain the Komsomol member he had been during the fighting years of the Revolution, as fiery and enthusiastic as ever.[22]

Finally, many references are made to Lenin and Stalin in the book; both names are almost always mentioned in a hallowed, awe-stricken, solemn tone. The glorification

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22 Vsevolod Kochetov, The Zhurbins, trans. R. Daglish (Moscow, 1953), p. 389.

of the Party, Lenin, and Stalin in various passages in the book may appear to the foreign reader as an unnecessary digression and in the nature of propaganda, but in the eyes of the Party it was perhaps the feature most worthy of merit. The following passage illustrates this feature and is also a good example of partiinost' writing:

> Let people be different in their individual characteristics. They are united by common ideas, the ideas of the Party, the ideas of Lenin and Stalin. ...
>
> Our Party--once a mere handful of people united round Lenin and Stalin--has covered an immense path. ...It is no longer a mere handful of men who spread these ideas, but millions of people, educating and enriching each other. The Party marches at their head, leading them farther and farther forward, cleaving for this flood a channel into the future.[23]

Some obvious criticisms could be levelled at this novel. Firstly, the story, which is primarily concerned with the building of a ship until it is completed and launched, is rather dull; this basic plot includes explan-

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23 Ibid., p. 397.

ations of a purely technical nature such as the one concerning the preference for welding to riveting in joining the hull plates of a ship. Of secondary importance are the pages devoted to the family life of the Zhurbins, but even in this working family's home the subject of conversation is invariably the shipyard; this overwhelming preoccupation of the characters with their work to the neglect of everything else is the second of the book's shortcomings. Thirdly, the characterization is also deserving of criticism. The positive characters in essence possess only good qualities; this fact tends to make them appear somewhat artificial and unlifelike. The ambitions and desires of some of the characters seem extremely improbable; for example, the young and pretty engineer, Zina, has the overriding, un-feminine wish to work in the stocks and be accepted by the tough shipbuilders as a fellow-worker. Such things as love and family do not appear to have much importance with her. Finally, no real conflict is present in the story unless one were to consider the small domestic misunderstandings and an

insignificant clash between Zina, the zealous young engineer, and Skobolev, one of the two negative characters; people are too occupied with outdoing each other in their daily work than to fight among themselves.

Despite these deficiencies, The Zhurbins was considered an achievement of Soviet literature and a fine example for other writers to emulate. It is interesting to note that the authorities valued this book so highly that it was even made into a film.

Soviet literature produced little of merit in the zhdanovshchina period. This circumstance was due to the fact that restrictions on the content of literary works were severe; these controls increased throughout the period and reached a maximum point at the time of Stalin's death. Writers did not chance incurring harsh punishment for overstepping the bounds that were set and therefore literary production during the period consisted of monotonous, colourless works. Some writers, such as Sholokhov,

who did not wish to conform to the Party demands and dictates, ceased writing altogether. Against such a background as this, some Soviet works of the post-Stalin period, which will be discussed in the next two chapters, appear even more remarkable for their descriptions of negative phenomena and open criticisms of various aspects of Soviet society.

CHAPTER II

SOVIET LITERARY POLICIES 1953-LATE 1956: THE CASES OF EHRENBURG AND PANOVA

The Aftermath

Immediately following Stalin's death the political climate in the Soviet Union was confused and uncertain. Soviet newspapers and other publications were filled with eulogies to the dead Leader. People from all walks of life paid tribute to the person who had ruled over them with an iron hand for the preceding three decades. In the literary sphere, which was also characterized by a lack of decision at this time, statements followed the general line. A. Ermilov, as all Soviet men of letters, joined in extolling the man who, through his instrument, Zhdanov, had imposed such tight controls on Soviet literature during his rule:

> Comrade Stalin taught us a broad approach to art, which was foreign to whatever kind of dogmatism and sectarian narrowness there might be, and he pointed out the possibility and benefit of a free struggle of various creative tendencies within the limits of

socialist realism.[1]

However, it is quite possible that Soviet writers were praising Stalin because of a sense of due respect for him as long-time head of their country; perhaps they felt an inner relief and hoped that the oppressive period of zhdanovshchina would also be at an end. Of course virtually no one expected that the literary method of socialist realism would be abandoned, but it is possible that many of them believed that the strict Stalinist literary policy would be modified and liberalized to some extent. This opinion was probably encouraged by two circumstances: the relative silence of the Party with respect to literary affairs, as political and economic matters were understandably of much greater importance at this time, and the execution of Beria, Stalin's trusted comrade, which was an act interpreted in some quarters as a sign that a more relaxed atmosphere would follow. Nevertheless, the previous difficult

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1 Pravda, March 15, 1953.

period with its restrictions and punishments was still fresh in people's minds and it is not surprising that the first attempts at freer writing were somewhat cautious.

The first literary item of significance that appeared in this period was the highly criticized article "On Sincerity in Literature" by V. Pomerantsev;[2] it was an outright departure from the hitherto play-it-safe attitude. In his article Pomerantsev called on the writer to be sincere in his presentations, to write according to the dictates of his heart, and not be governed by the demands of the Party. He thus rejected the principle of partiinost' in literature and called for a substantial revision, if not a complete abolition, of the method of socialist realism. A controversy arose over the article. Literaturnaia gazeta opposed it while students who were in favour of it answered the criticisms of this newspaper in their letters. For all

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2 Novy mir, No. 12, December [set in type October 1, sent to press December 12], 1953, 218-245; trans. in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, hereafter cited as CDSP, VI (5) (March 17, 1954), 3-9, and VI (6) (March 24, 1954), 3-7, and 22.

intents and purposes a final judgement was passed on the article by A. Surkov:

> V. Pomerantsev's harmful article is essentially directed against the foundations of our literature--against its close link with life, against its Communist ideology, against the Leninist principle of Party adherence in literature, against the most important requirements of socialist realism. ...Wrapping itself in some abstractly conceived demand for "sincerity in literature", the author, by the entire tone of his article, by its entire direction, orients writers toward turning chiefly to the shady, negative aspects of our life.
>
> ...The author tries to "run down" our literature instead of helping men of letters to understand and overcome genuine rather than imagined and exaggerated shortcomings in the development of literature.[3]

Pomerantsev's article, appearing less than a year after Stalin's death, was of course considered too revolutionary in its demands and outlook. Party and literary officials felt that the author called for too great a break with the past and therefore criticized his views.

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3 Pravda, May 25, 1954; trans. in CDSP, VI (19) (June 23, 1954), 5.

However, an air of uncertainty remained. This fact resulted in additional undesirable works and articles by Soviet writers who were in effect probing to ascertain the amount of liberty that was permissable. Among these information-gathering soundings were some which went too far in this approach, in the exposing of negative phenomena in Soviet life. Two of the books relegated to this category were I. Ehrenburg's The Thaw and V. Panova's The Seasons, both of which were published in 1954 and evoked considerable controversy; a consideration of these two particular works and the criticisms they aroused will throw some light on official Soviet literary policies during 1954 and 1955.

The Thaw

This novelette deals with a brief period in the lives of a few ordinary Soviet people in a small, country town. The main theme centres around the main negative character, Zhuravlev, who, in order to fulfill the plan

for the factory of which he is director, purchases a new foundry with the money allocated for new workers' dwellings. At the end of the story a great storm comes up and several of the workers are left homeless. Zhuravlev is removed from his position as he is held responsible for the workers not having suitable, durable homes. Other events that take place in the story include the involvement of Zhuravlev's wife, Lena, with the engineer, Koroteev, the Sokolovsky-Vera Sherer and Savchenko-Sonia Pukhov affairs, and the cynical doings of the hack artist, Volodia Pukhov.

It is strange that a book of this kind describing some darker aspects of Soviet society came from the pen of such a well-liked and trusted writer as Ehrenburg. As certainly the most-travelled of Soviet writers during the Stalin regime, he is one of the best-known Soviet writers abroad. Although he wavered in his support of the Soviet system during its early years and this fact is reflected in his writings at this time, he decisively

threw his weight behind Soviet power at the First Congress of Soviet Writers and hailed the method of socialist realism which was approved at this congress. From this time until his writing of The Thaw, his books and journalistic articles, which were written at the time of the Second World War, have been highly praised by the Party; his ability both as a talented writer and as a person who was able to discern, and remain within, the limits as prescribed by the Party during the late forties and early fifties, led some foreign observers to call him the "Party weather-vane" of Soviet literature. In this light The Thaw must be considered a remarkable departure for Ehrenburg.

The Thaw was greeted with mixed feelings on the part of readers and literary authorities. However, as might be expected, the evaluation that prevailed in the controversy in the final analysis was the one espoused by the book's opponents; these declared the main objectionable points to be the characterization, the passivity of Soviet people towards evil in their

midst, and the conclusion derived from Zhuravlev's eventual downfall as a result of the storm, that is, bureaucrats need not be actively fought and removed since some "external force" will bring this about. These views will be referred to in more detail in the consideration of the criticism, pro and con, which follows.

Support for the book came from ordinary readers who wrote in their praises to literary publications. For example, one reader declared that Ehrenburg had not concentrated good qualities in any one character because he "tried to strengthen the impression of the mass nature of what is wise, honest, and good in our life". Another reader believed that the portrayal of negative aspects in Soviet life summoned the reader "to fight them, to strive toward the pure and bright. The more works there are of this kind the fewer Zhuravlyovs [sic], Pukhovs and Tanechkas [an immoral actress, totally lacking in talent] there will be in our society". Still

another, while criticizing the novel, praised the portrayal of Zhuravlev which in his view revealed "the essential traits of the callous bureaucrat".[4]

Komsomol'skaia pravda, organ of the Young Communist League, led the attack on the book; it criticized Ehrenburg for concentrating on the darker aspects of Soviet reality and especially for taking as his characters "spiritually exhausted and broken people".[5] A considerable debate arose between Simonov and Ehrenburg after the former had unleashed a bitter attack against the novelette's characters and their outlook.[6] Simonov had the last word in this debate due to the fact that he had the support of the now definitely-formed attitude toward the book; however, Ehrenburg, virtually alone, refused to admit his error. At the Second

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4 Literaturnaia gazeta, October 5, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VI (49) (January 19, 1955), 13-14.

5 Komsomol'skaia pravda, June 6, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VI (20) (June 30, 1954), 5.

6 Literaturnaia gazeta, July 17 and 20, 1954.

Congress of Soviet Writers in December, 1954, Ehrenburg still remained unshakeable and refused to admit that the criticisms directed at him were justified; he stated:

> I would prefer not to recall the criticism of my last story [The Thaw] contained in the report and co-report, but this might be wrongly interpreted. I definitely do not suffer from delusions about myself, and I know that there is much that is incomplete and simply unfulfilled in "The Thaw," as in some of my other books. However, I reproach myself for far different reasons than those chosen by the critics.[7]

There were several references to The Thaw in reports to the Congress. M. Ibragimov upbraided Ehrenburg for persistently defending the shortcomings of his novelette, Sholokhov ridiculed the author's attitude, supported Simonov's view, and asserted that criticism of a fellow-writer was an inalienable right of the Soviet man of letters,[8] and Riurikov, although he also opposed the book, moderated his criticism by the statement:

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7 Literaturnaia gazeta, December 20, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VII (6) (March 23, 1955), 28.

8 Literaturnaia gazeta, December 23 and 26, 1954; exc. and trans. in CDSP, VII (8) (April 6, 1955), 14 and 20.

> I can only add that the writers of letters sharply criticizing "The Thaw" also highly evaluated the services of I. G. Ehrenburg to Soviet literature and expressed confidence that he will write new works worthy of his talent and his place in Soviet literature.[9]

Although this chapter is concerned with literary policies only up to late 1956, Ehrenburg's later statements with regard to The Thaw and his present position in Soviet literary circles should be included at this time not only because of their relevancy to the subject matter under consideration, but also for the interest they will undoubtedly afford the reader.

Despite all the attacks made on his book, Ehrenburg, possibly because of his high place in Soviet society as a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet, member of the Bureau of the World Peace Council, member of the Committee for the awarding of International Lenin Prizes, and President of the USSR-France Society, did not surrender to his critics. In an article in Pravda, the official

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9 Literaturnaia gazeta, December 22, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VII (6) (March 23, 1955), 33-34.

Party organ, on May 19, 1957, Ehrenburg referred to his book with pride and hotly condemned the vociferous campaign being waged against him:

> ..."The Thaw" has provoked controversy. It seems to me that a lack of controversy about his work is an author's bitterest pill. For books that are merely indifferent, that repeat what everyone already knows, do not arouse arguments. Such books contain neither errors nor achievements--they have no heart. ...
>
> It seems to me that the author of a book in which this or that critic sees an artistic failure should not be attacked as though he were an enemy. Our society has many enemies abroad. We must use our consciousness and our conscience to struggle against these enemies. We must strike out against our enemies and not against our own people.[10]

As recently as 1959 Ehrenburg has made statements in defense of his novelette. In answer to V. Serebrovskaia, who had contended that he bore "a share of the moral responsibility [because of The Thaw] for the characteristic traits in the most recent [criticized] exhibition of young artists",[11] Ehrenburg stated:

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10 Pravda, May 19, 1957; trans, in CDSP, IX (20) (June 26, 1957), 42 and 27.

11 Literaturnaia gazeta, October 6, 1959.

> I am quite critical of my own literary works and can see many weak pages in "The Thaw" but I have never considered this novel an "ideological mistake", nor do I now. It was written two years before the 20th Party Congress, which to my mind was, like the 21st Congress, a great and joyful event of our epoch. I saw how many wrong aspects of our mores were disappearing and how human relations were changing, and that is what I tried to narrate in "The Thaw", within the limits of my artistic abilities.[12]

Although Ehrenburg has not been called to task for his immovability, he nevertheless during the late fifties has been heatedly criticized for his views on art which have been expressed in some of his recent articles. He has even been labelled a "revisionist" in some quarters. His high position has evidently not prevented the newspapers from snubbing reviews of his recent works. To conclude this account of Ehrenburg and his book, I believe the following passage illustrates both the writer's determination to remain firm in his beliefs and his skilful and witty turn of speech; in

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12 Literaturnaia gazeta, October 17, 1959.

an interview with a correspondent of Literaturnaia gazeta, upon being asked about his plans for future works, he declares with indignation:

> I have not come across even one article, which is dedicated to any of my last books, in either "Literaturnaia gazeta" or in other publications. I am in no way complaining and am not affirming that my books present a special interest and that one must obligatorily write about them in the newspapers. I am only trying to be logical. If the hides of slain bears do not attract the attention of our fur-dealers, excuse me, critics--then, truly, its not worth talking about the hide of a bear that has not been slain yet.[13]

The Seasons

Vera Panova's novel The Seasons, which came out at about the same time as Ehrenburg's novelette, was also the subject of considerable controversy.

The story takes place in a Siberian city and deals primarily with two Soviet families, the Kupriyanovs and Bortasheviches. The heroine of the piece is Dorofeia

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13 Literaturnaia gazeta, June 9, 1959.

Kupriyanova, a hard-working, highly-placed, and respected Communist, who, through her pampering and spoiling of her son, Gennadii, turns him into a good-for-nothing loafer, who looks on honest Soviet workers with contempt. Gennadii likes to do just what he pleases at all times and eventually winds up in the company of a band of speculators. With the exception of a knife-wound, received from one of the rogues in the band, he remains unpunished in the end. The main negative character, Stepan Bortashevich, occupies an important State position and is respected by the community. Due to his personal vanity, lack of courage, and an evil wife, he has for many years been at the mercy of a band of rogues and has been embezzling State funds. Bortashevich is tormented by the constant fear that he will be unmasked in his sinister doings, and when this happens, he shoots himself. Surprisingly the two Bortashevich children are ideal, honest, and conscientious, and are contrasted by Panova to the evil parents. Many aspects of Soviet society are effectively described in the book, for example, the

New Year's celebrations, the outlook and everyday work of ordinary Soviet citizens, the housing shortage, and the Soviet school in operation.

The book was of considerable interest and contrasted markedly with the monotonous productions of the pre-1953 period because of its fine style of narration, vividness of description, and portrayal of the bad as well as the good. Nevertheless the work was officially termed a failure because Panova, in the opinion of official literary circles, had sunk into the "quicksand of objectivity" and had distorted Soviet reality.

Immediately after its publication, Leningrad papers and the official organ of the Union of Soviet Writers, Literaturnaia gazeta, praised the novel. Other than this initial approval, however, one of the few persons who looked on the work favourably was the noted Soviet writer, M. Shaginian. She expressed the view that The Seasons was an improvement over Panova's previous works; the following

lines illustrate her evaluation of the novel:

> ...In linking the entire people so closely and directly to their government through the days and the seasons, housing and trade, marriage and childbirth, schools and wages, elections and voting, the Soviet system has penetrated the entire gamut of our feelings: all the way from great happiness to remorse--all that we call "personal experiences"--endowing it with an element of unity between the personal and social which can never be duplicated.[14]

Vsevolod Kochetov, author of the novels, The Zhurbins, previously referred to, and Brat'ia Ershovy (The Ershov Brothers), which will be discussed in chapter four of this work, initiated the attacks on the novel. He accused Panova of distorting the portraits of Communists and of merely "stating isolated facts, essentially avoiding explanation of the causes of them". In his view neither Bortashevich, Dorofeia, nor Gennadii are condemned in the novel; he states:

> He [the reader] is called upon to pity Bortashevich's children, to pity and "understand" Dorofeya and her son, to wonder that

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14 Izvestiia, March 28, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VI (13) (May 12, 1954), 40.

> excellent children grow up in the families of scoundrels, while in the families of those who have shed their blood for Soviet rule children grow up scoundrels, and to think: So that is how things are sometimes.
>
> If this is so, if the author of "The Seasons" undertook to show "how things are sometimes," without passing any judgment, then she has taken the road of naturalism. And naturalism explains nothing.[15]

At the Second Congress of Writers Simonov joined in the criticism of the novel; the point he condemned most of all was Panova's treatment of Dorofeia and Bortashevich. Like Kochetov, Simonov claimed that Panova nowhere censured either of these characters, that she had merely described their ignoble behaviour without passing any judgement on it.[16]

M. Shaginian spoke at the Congress, again praised the novel and criticized the views of its critics:

> ...Even if she [Panova] were accused of a flight into objectivism, this would be justifiable to a certain extent only with regard to her first novels. ...She worked on her new novel for about four years, put

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15 Pravda, May 27, 1954; trans. in CDSP, VI (20) (June 30, 1954), 3-5.

16 Literaturnaia gazeta, December 18, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (3) (March 2, 1955), 11.

> a great deal more knowledge of life, depth and feeling into it than into her earlier works, and "The Seasons" reflected the writer's extensive work.
>
> But what did the critics do? It was this novel in which V. Panova made a step forward, in which her individuality is a great deal more defined and involved than in the earlier novels and in which she worked on the material in a particularly creative way that was discredited by Kochetov's unjust article.[17]

Panova, a well-respected and talented writer, did not make any move to acknowledge her errors and refrained from participating in the dispute being waged over her book. She has been continuing her career as before.

The Party Attitude 1954 - February, 1956

In the Pravda article in which A. Surkov condemned Pomerantsev and other writers of a similar view, he expressed the opinion that it was necessary for writers to be guided always by Party spirit in their works:

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17 Literaturnaia gazeta, December 26, 1954; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VII (10) (April 20, 1955), 13.

> The Party has always reminded the Soviet writer that the strength of literature resides in a close, unbreakable link with the people's life. The Party has summoned and summons us men of letters of the Soviet Union to be guided by what constitutes the vital foundation of the Soviet system--the policy of the Communist Party--and to take a bold part in life, to help bring up the young generation courageous, confident of its powers, unafraid of obstacles and ready to overcome any hindrances.[18]

However, despite such militant statements, an atmosphere of uncertainty persisted among the writers and some continued writing in the new more critical way.

Thus, due to the apparent indecision and lack of firmness of the Party with regard to policy, in the literary as in other fields, the authorities witnessed the appearance of various works and articles during the period 1953-1954 in which much the same outlook as the one embodied in The Thaw and The Seasons was presented.* Therefore, the Party and the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers felt it necessary to state a literary

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18 Pravda, May 25, 1954; trans. in CDSP, VI (19) (June 23, 1954), 4.

* For example, L. Zorin's play, The Guests, and B. Pasternak's poem, The Dawn.

policy at the Second Congress and to officially condemn these errant works as failures and not in keeping with the principles of socialist realism. The message from the Central Committee of the Party to the Congress seemed to presage a new tightening in policy; the Party Committee called on Soviet writers to aid in the upbringing of the new man, to educate him, to inspire him to creativity, to create vivid portraits of contemporary workers, to master Marxism-Leninism, to strengthen patriotism, to live the life of the people, and to enrich and develop their artistic craftsmanship.[19]

Of particular interest at the Congress was the speech made by V. Lacis; he probably had I. Ehrenburg and V. Panova, among others, in mind when he said:

> I think that separation from the life of our Soviet people is the reason for what we sometimes find in the writings of certain of our writers, the errors, shortcomings, distortions of reality and slander of Soviet people, the preoccupation with everything negative, obsolete, vile, and ugly.[20]

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19 Pravda and Izvestiia, December 16, 1954; trans. in CDSP, VI (48) (January 12, 1955), 3-4.

20 Pravda, October 16, 1954; exc. and trans. in CDSP, VI (44) (December 15, 1954), 15.

Nevertheless the atmosphere in Soviet society was still far from the state of oppressive rigidity which characterized the Stalinist period. The attempt at a partial return to the Party-style literature of the zhdanovshchina period was a failure. Soviet writers listened attentively to the call to conformity, but many works that appeared following the Congress still lacked the desired qualities. This statement is borne out by the criticism voiced in a Pravda editorial in September, 1955:

> Nine months have elapsed since the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, where it was established that our literature devotes insufficient attention to the theme of the working class. However, literary journals have still not gladdened readers with brilliant works about today's deeds of the Soviet working man.[21]

This state of affairs continued in the Soviet literary field until the following year when a significant change in policy was effected.

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21 Pravda, September 18, 1955; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VII (38) (November 2, 1955), 28.

Khrushchev's Denunciation of the "Cult": Effect on Literature

In February, 1956, Khrushchev made his famous speech to the Twentieth Congress of the Party in which he downgraded Stalin for fostering a cult around himself; in his speech he declared:

> Comrades: The cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person. This is supported by numerous facts. One of the most characteristic examples of Stalin's self-glorification and of his lack of even elementary modesty is the edition of his Short Biography, which was published in 1948.
>
> This book is an expression of the most dissolute flattery, an example of making a man into a godhead, of transforming him into an infallible sage, "the greatest leader, sublime strategist of all times and nations." Finally, no other words could be found with which to lift Stalin up to the heavens.[22]

This outright condemnation of Stalin's self-glorification and the belief held by many that Stalin, through his secretaries, had passed on instructions to the leaders

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22 N. S. Khrushchev, "The Crimes of the Stalin Era: Special Report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," anotated by Boris I. Nicolaevsky (Pamphlet) (New York, 1956), 54.

of the Writers' Union to the effect that writers were to praise him in their works, led some literary figures (the young poet Evtushenko, for example) to write articles condemning literary productions of the Stalinist period as worthless. This action was a mistake as these writers found out some time later. Even though Khrushchev had declared that harm had been done literature as a result of the cult and had voiced the view that the errors needed correcting, nevertheless he wanted any criticism of the shortcomings of the Stalinist period kept within certain limits. Some time earlier, during the first relaxation of controls in the literary field, O. Korniichuk, the Ukrainian dramatist, had written a play entitled Kryla (Wings), purportedly illustrating these very limits. This work had been enthusiastically received by official literary circles at that time. A few statements concerning Korniichuk's play will throw some light on the type of work that was expected of the Soviet writer following the official change in attitude towards Stalin.

This work includes a criticism of bureaucratic methods and attitudes as manifested in the chairman of a town soviet, Dremliuha, but at the same time the main character, the Party secretary, Romodan, is significantly portrayed in a positive light throughout. Romodan successfully fights bureaucracy and complacency that has existed in the town for a long time. The play ends on a happy note as the Party secretary, having experienced some unhappiness in his personal life, in addition to triumphing over Dremliuha, also appears to have achieved success in coming to a reconciliation with his estranged wife.

The play was highly praised mainly due to the fact that Korniichuk made his main character such a strong, persistent, and knowing individual. Romodan completely overshadows his adversary in strength and persistence, and there is never any doubt as to who will eventually be victorious in the struggle. Romodan is a proponent of the new, progressive, dynamic Khrushchev

agricultural policies, while Dremliuha is a prototype of the old, static, bureaucratic Stalinist agricultural manager. This view is borne out in K. Simonov's review of the play:

> ...The play includes much that has happened around us during these years. Its action takes place at about the time of the September plenary session of the Party Central Committee [concerned with agriculture], but since great causes are not accomplished in a day it would be unjust to narrow the story down to this period alone. Everything great and new which entered the life of the countryside with the September plenary session is continuing to develop in a fierce struggle against the stagnant and backward, which has its concrete advocates and silent defenders. The play is therefore timely, it attacks what is old and stagnant, what life has not yet smashed and routed, and what is only waiting for a moment when it is considered dead in order to revive quietly, first here, then there.[23]

Interestingly, the play, Wings, bears a marked similarity, in its approach, to works of V. Ovechkin, a writer who will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

The Khrushchev speech was an event of major importance;

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23 Pravda, May 17, 1955; trans. in CDSP, VII (20) (June 29, 1955), 16.

it was one in a long series of policy reversals which have characterized the Soviet Communist Party from its earliest days. Its repercussions were felt in the literary sphere. Proponents of the Stalinist policy of rigid Party control over literary affairs did not know what to expect. The course of action they chose was not difficult to foresee. Swimming with the tide they blamed the failures in literature not on the method of socialist realism with its obligatory partiinost', but on distortions of this method brought about by the cult of the individual leader.

The first official pronouncement of the new Party stand was ennunciated in an article in Kommunist just after the Party Congress; it declared that errors in art, which had arisen in the atmosphere of the cult and had "led to standardization and to the stagnation of artists' creative potentialities", would have to be eliminated.[24] This statement also applied to

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24 Kommunist, No. 5, April, 1956; exc. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (25) (August 1, 1956), 7.

writers as to all men of the arts. The actual mistakes were pointed out in a later article in the same magazine. Though denying that all Soviet literature of the previous fifteen to twenty years had been ruined by the cult, since an admission of this kind would have implied that the socialist realism method was to blame, the article conceded that considerable harm had been done to literature during Stalin's later years. The following specific criticisms were included: Stalin himself was the only person who could introduce new ideas into the literary sphere; Zhdanov's report in 1946 was in part inaccurate; credit for founding the method of socialist realism was attributed to Stalin, whereas it had really been Gorky's achievement; the harmful "no-conflict" theory, which resulted in the embellishing of reality, was a manifestation of the cult; the necessity for Soviet writers to work within such strict, narrow bounds led them to bypass complex, challenging themes and had the effect of impoverishing Soviet literature.[25]

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25 Kommunist, No. 12, August [published in September], 1956; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (35) (October 10, 1956), 5-7.

As was to be expected, this sharp policy reversal with respect to literature had its consequences in the countries of Eastern Europe within the Soviet sphere of influence. Some Polish and Hungarian writers called for the discarding of the socialist realism method as a harmful Stalinist phenomenon, a relic of the cult of the individual. The Poles argued that it was absurd to declare that socialist realism was based on Marxist aesthetics and that ever since its introduction in 1934 complete stagnation had resulted in Soviet literary development.[26] The Soviet critic, V. Ozerov, answered these charges in the following words:

> ...The pernicious effects of the cult of the individual were manifested most strongly in the postwar period of Soviet literature. No one denies the difficulties experienced by our art during this period; Soviet writers themselves speak of them sharply and frankly. But they connect them not with the method of socialist realism, which is hostile to any varnishing of reality, but with alien influences, hack work, and a play-it-safe attitude.[27]

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26 Literaturnaia gazeta, September 30, 1956; cond. and trans, in CDSP, VIII (39) (November 7, 1956), 7.

27 Ibid., 8.

It is significant to note the similarity of action that was taken by the political and literary spheres in the Soviet Union. Though condemning Stalin for some malpractices, Khrushchev and his colleagues did not go all the way in their condemnation but declared that the former leader had his good, as well as his bad, points; he had accomplished great positive things, even though he had been guilty of grievous errors. Official literary circles declared that although Soviet literature had suffered greatly because of the cult, nevertheless the method of socialist realism was still basically sound and should be retained. However, there was evidently considerable uneasiness and perplexity among Soviet writers themselves on what attitude to take in the controversy over socialist realism; K. Simonov, in an article in Literaturnaia gazeta, criticized those guilty of this indecision:

> The Soviet Writers' Union is organizing writing forces poorly. Erroneous views are not promptly rebuffed, and some Communists

> among the writers avoid frank conversations with their confreres. ...[28]

During this new period of uncertainty the important book, Not by Bread Alone, was published. This novel went further in exposing the dark sides of Soviet life than was the case with any previous work in the history of Soviet literature since socialist realism was declared to be the only acceptable method of writing. Due to this circumstance and the fact that the book is a fine means for studying Soviet literary policies (Party Secretary Khrushchev even participated in the controversy that arose over the issues that it raised), I will devote the next chapter exclusively to this work and its author, Vladimir Dudintsev.

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28 Literaturnaia gazeta, January 8, 1957; exc. and trans. in CDSP, IX (2) (February 20, 1957), 36.

CHAPTER III

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Among all Soviet books of the post-Stalin period that have been the subject of controversy, Not by Bread Alone could be singled out as one of the most important, more so, in fact, than either I. Ehrenburg's The Thaw or V. Panova's The Seasons. The atmosphere in the Soviet Union at the time when Dudintsev wrote his novel was uncertain from the point of view of the amount of liberty that could be taken in criticizing the negative aspects of Soviet life. Dudintsev was witness to the fact that both Ehrenburg and Panova before him had written books containing considerable criticism of Soviet reality, which they would not have dared to write in the later years of Stalin's regime; however, although these two writers were subjected to a certain amount of criticism for straying from the path of socialist realism, they were continuing their literary careers as before. One could surmise that the light treatment of Ehrenburg and Panova was a factor which encouraged Dudintsev to write his novel. In it he proceeded even further than they had done in exposing malpractices

and shortcomings in Soviet society. However, above all, Dudintsev wrote his book condemning bureaucracy because he felt it his duty as a Soviet patriot and he was convinced that his "washing of dirty linen" in public would lead to the elimination of corrupt and deadening influences in Soviet life. Therefore, the fact that Dudintsev has written a book, so critical of certain aspects of Soviet society, is no reason for one to suppose that he is an opponent of the Soviet way of life, as some readers are inclined to do; on the contrary, he is indeed a loyal and devoted Soviet citizen.

Before analysing the book in detail, I believe a brief account of Dudintsev's life will prove to be both interesting, in showing the kind of man he is, and informative, in understanding his views.

About the Author

Vladimir Dudintsev was born in Kupyansk, Ukraine, in 1918. He graduated from the Moscow Juridical Institute and

began writing in 1938 when he was still a student. At the beginning of the war he commanded an infantry unit at the front and was severely wounded near Leningrad in the autumn of 1941. Following his recuperation, Dudintsev, during the remaining years of the war, acted in the capacity of defense counsel with a military tribunal in Siberia. After the war he devoted himself entirely to writing and was a staff contributor to Komsomol'skaia pravda; he wrote mainly short stories and essays for this newspaper. The first collection of his stories was published in 1952 by the Soviet Writer Publishing House; it dealt chiefly with the rebuilding of the war-ravaged economy and was permeated with enthusiasm for "the shock troops of the labor front". Dudintsev's stories differed little from others appearing in this difficult period of the zhdanovshchina, in which a writer was compelled to adhere to contemporary themes, glorify the aggressive hero, and avoid the pitfalls of bourgeois nationalism and cosmopolitanism.[1] In 1956 his

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1 Institute for the Study of the USSR, Munich, Biographic Directory of the USSR (New York, 1958), pp. 145-146.

important novel, Not by Bread Alone, was first published in the magazine, Novy mir, and, after initial favourable comment, it was roundly condemned for its "blackening" properties. Surprisingly the book was published in the Soviet Union in the spring of 1957 in an edition of 30,000 copies after it had been officially condemned. It is this novel of Dudintsev, which has been the subject of considerable controversy in the Soviet Union, that I will discuss below.

The Plot

The novel, Not by Bread Alone, is concerned almost entirely with the hardships experienced by a lone inventor, Dmitri Lopatkin, and his attempts to put his invention, a machine for the centrifugal casting of iron pipes, at the disposal of the State. Lopatkin experiences many ups and downs in his long and arduous journey but eventually he is crowned with success.

In the town of Muzga, where the novel begins, the

hero is generally looked upon as a crank and fool and receives coarse treatment from Drozdov, the director of the plant in the town. His only support is provided by Drozdov's wife, Nadia, who is disenchanted by her husband's self-satisfied attitude and his high-handed treatment of subordinates, Vera Pavlovna, who is in love with him, and Pete Sianov, who believes in him and provides him with material support. Lopatkin later spends a short time at the designing office in the regional capital for the purpose of preparing the final drawings of his invention, which has at last been tentatively accepted; here he is treated with contempt by Uriupin, a small "cog in the bureaucratic wheel", who heads the designing office. His only friend is Arakhovsky, a designer, who warns him of the difficulties which he can expect when he arrives in Moscow.

He journeys to Moscow where his invention is scoffed at and turned down by the "big-wigs" of the Scientific Research Institute; the man in supreme authority at the Institute is Professor Avdiyev, a pseudo-scientist, who

does not want to lose face to an unknown inventor and therefore orders his lackeys, Tepikin and Fundator, to kill the project at the discussion which is held to approve or reject it. Lopatkin's attempts to appeal the decision are thwarted by Shutikov, a careerist deputy-minister, and Drozdov, who has in the meantime been promoted to a new position in Moscow. The hero strikes up an acquaintance with an old, disillusioned, apathetic inventor, Professor Busko. The old man's reflections on life and the two inventors' experiences together (they are later joined by Nadia Drozdov) make up a large portion of the story.

When a machine, made by the Avdiyev crowd, proves wasteful and inefficient in producing pipes, these bureaucrats are in danger of being exposed. Lopatkin, a dangerous man for them now that he has obtained permission direct from the minister to build his machine, is arrested through their intrigues and is sentenced to eight years in a correctional labour camp. Through the combined efforts of Galitsky, the only man that had supported the inventor at

the discussion which rejected his machine, a court justice, who was convinced of his innocence, and a designer, who also felt that the hero had been unjustly treated, Lopatkin is freed after serving one and a half years of his sentence. In the meantime Galitsky has built Lopatkin's machine at his own plant, which is under the direct supervision of the ministry and does not have to answer to the Shutikov-Avdiyev crowd, and it has proven an outstanding success.

The story ends on a rather disappointing note. Instead of the punishment of the whole group of culprits, only two minor offenders are dismissed from their positions while the three major bureaucrats remain unscathed; Avdiyev retains his position, Shutikov is transferred to another ministry, and Drozdov is promoted to the rank of deputy-minister.

General Criticism

This book by coincidence came out immediately following Khrushchev's famous speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, and Dudintsev leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to his

purpose in writing it; his aim was to expose the bureaucracy and deceit which was present during the Stalinist regime; the author states: "In my book I freely raised a question which seems to me very important. The decisions of the twentieth congress confirmed me in the consciousness that I was right".[2] Thus, he believed that he was rendering the country a service in unmasking men of high position who were preventing the advancement of Soviet technology through their bureaucratic practices, and lulling the people into a false sense of security through their assurances that everything was in order. He placed special emphasis on the new class of Soviet bureaucrats, which had achieved a prominent place in Soviet society in the early thirties; it has steadily increased its powers since that time. Representatives of this class were characterized by their inertia, lack of initiative, and distrust for, and opposition to, anything new. In the spring of 1957 when the novel was being severely criticized at a meeting of the Moscow Writers' Union, Dudintsev, in an attempt to justify

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2 Vladimir Dudintsev, Not by Bread Alone, trans. Dr. Edith Bone (New York, 1957), p. 10.

himself and to prove that his intentions and motives were positive and constructive, stated his reason for writing a work of this kind:

> I remember the early days of the Great Patriotic War. I lay in a trench. A dogfight was going on overhead. Messerschmidts were shooting down our planes, although our planes were superior in numbers. Something snapped in me, because I had always heard that our planes were the fastest and the best.
>
> It is said that I express blackening tendencies. This is not so. I simply do not want to see a repetition of what I saw then. I have a right to such a wish![3]

This same view is expressed in the novel in the words of Lopatkin:

> And yet all these scientists, Avdiyev, Fundator, Volovik, Tepikin, are still riding along on the technical methods of the day before yesterday. Like the silkworm, they spin cocoons for themselves out of their own spittle. Perhaps at some time you may have seen this: a foreign motorcar with a little flag on it standing in the street. Like a living bird. All shiny. And around it a crowd of our people. Have you ever seen that? Well, when I see such a thing, I feel at once as though something was burning me here in my side! I feel that if I stay there another minute looking at the scene I shall fall and never get up

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3 Literaturnaia gazeta, March 19, 1957; cond. and trans. in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, hereafter listed as CDSP, IX (13) (May 8, 1957), 23.

> again. And it is these people, Comrade Titov, who force such a disgrace on us. Its a monopoly. They do not allow any leaps forward, only a scarcely perceptible ascent. And they strike at everyone who thinks differently.[4]

Criticism of the book can be divided into two periods: the initial period beginning in late October, 1956, when the novel was received favourably just after the completion of its publication in Novy mir, and the time of the work's condemnation, which began about a month later with calm, abated criticism, developing into severe censure.

When the novel first appeared in print, Soviet literary men, apparently believing that they were following the new line of the Party as proclaimed by Khrushchev at the Congress, praised the book. In point of fact, however, the Party did not clearly state what its attitude to severe criticism of errors of the past would be; in the case of Not by Bread Alone, the Party passed no comments and remained uncommitted. Nevertheless, at a meeting of the prose

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4 Dudintsev, op. cit., p. 261.

section of the Moscow Branch of the USSR Writers' Union, comments by literary personages, who believed they could expect a considerable lessening of Party controls in the literary field, were unanimous in their praise of the novel: V. Ivanov declared that the novel was "imbued with love for man and with true respect for the ordinary little man"; L. Slavin contended that the character Drozdov was a realistic portrayal of the anti-social type that was a product of the cult of the individual; N. Atarov regarded the book as a "kind of encyclopedia of struggle for technical progress"; V. Ovechkin praised the characterization; V. Ketlinskaia said the work aroused Soviet people to struggle against the evil existing in their midst; K. Simonov expressed the opinion that the author was condemning the individual bureaucrats and did not intend his book to be a criticism of the entire Party, State, and public apparati.[5] Some time later warm praise of the novel appeared in the Trade-Union newspaper, Trud, in an

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5 Literaturnaia gazeta, October 27, 1956; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (49) (Jan. 16, 1957), 4-5.

article written by N. Zhdanov. He declared that the chief merit in the novel was the character, Lopatkin, a "courageous and honest patriot of our country"; the work, through its "deep portrayal of the truth of life" contrasted markedly to the "prettified" works of the past; Drozdov and Drozdovism were products of the "cult" period and were effectively exposed in the novel; artistic force and effective characterization were features of the work; the book was "optimistic in that it is in 'the militant nature of the revolutionary ideology, the affirmation of life, confidence in the future'."[6]

In late November, 1956, the Party evidently expressed its dissatisfaction with the novel; in its view, Dudintsev had gone too far in his criticism and was "blackening" the Soviet system. This official criticism ended the short-lived period of praise for the book and was reflected in an about-face on the part of writers and editorial boards of official publications in their attitude towards the

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6 Trud, October 31, 1956; trans. in CDSP, VIII (49) (Jan. 16, 1957), 3-4.

novel. The critic, V. Platonov, got the campaign against the novel underway when he stated that although Dudintsev had correctly portrayed the bureaucrats and exposed their harmful effect on Soviet life, nevertheless he was open to criticism on various points: he had attributed to Drozdov and Shutikov "mass features" which in reality they do not possess; he had opposed "creative-madness" to "practical common sense"; Busko's "first-story" and "second-story" theory, which likened inventors to superior beings in contrast to the ordinary people, had not been refuted by Lopatkin; the hero did not have any normal ties with a collective.[7]

Another critic, V. Kriuchkova, in an article in Izvestiia, the official government newspaper, attacked the novel even more severely. She gave Dudintsev credit for correctly portraying bureaucrats and careerists and also praised his characterization of Nadia, but apart from these two points, her article was filled with criticisms of the book. Her criticisms can be summarized in the follow-

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7 Literaturnaia gazeta, Nov. 24, 1956; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (49) (Jan. 16, 1957), 6-7.

ing lines. The hero, Lopatkin, is the most deserving object of criticism in the book as he is an individualist and an egotist by nature; in addition, contrary to the principles of socialist realism, he is a static character who is the same at the end of the novel as he was at the beginning, "a stone-hearted man with a mission who closes his eyes to both death and life". The motif of solitude is ever present, and the reader is led to believe that "good people" live apart. Dudintsev has not seen fit to represent the part the masses play in the fight against bureaucracy and has taken for his theme isolated cases and represented these mainly from the negative side.[8] Wanda Wasilewska declared the novel to contain only "a grain of truth:"

> But if we accept this novel as the whole truth, it becomes incomprehensible how it was precisely our country that created the world's first atomic power plant, where our country's grandiose achievements in, for instance, chemistry, came from, how it is that our state has thousands and millions of talented and world-famous inventors and rationalizers and whence sprang the unconquerable might of our state.[9]

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8 Izvestiia, Dec. 2, 1956; trans. in CDSP, VIII (49) (Jan. 16, 1957), 7-9.

9 Literaturnaia gazeta, Dec. 15, 1956; cond. and trans. in CDSP, VIII (50) (Jan. 23, 1957), 5.

When the novel appeared abroad and drew praise from foreign readers, this circumstance led Soviet authorities to declare that Dudintsev's book was a weapon in the hands of enemies in blackening Soviet society. The well-known Soviet critic, L. Novichenko, expresses this view:

> With the aim of weakening the power of our socialist state, imperialist propaganda is sounding off over the microphones of hundreds of newspapers about the "degeneration" of the Soviet socialist system. ...
>
> And it is under such circumstances that works of art are appearing in our country in which, willfully or otherwise, our reality, our system are sullied; in which bureaucrats and careerists are represented as all but omnipotent, and the average Soviet man as insignificant and powerless. As is well known, the journal Novy mir has published several such works, which give a one-sided view of our Soviet reality. [The speaker considers V. Dudintsev's novel "Not by Bread Alone" to be one such work. ...][10]

K. Simonov, the editor of Novy mir at the time when Dudintsev's novel first appeared in print, who consistently sticks to the Party line and is a staunch advocate of

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10 Literaturnaia gazeta, Jan. 15, 1957, cond. and trans. in CDSP, IX (8) (April 3, 1957), 29.

partiinost' in literature, first praised the book but later attacked it and Dudintsev personally; he acted in this way because the latter had defended his book and had called those who had condemned it "panic-mongers". In his speech to a plenary session of the Moscow writers in March, 1957, Simonov stated:

> I think that if he were to make a sober assessment of both what is good in the novel (and the novel's good points have been praised) and what is bad, Dudintsev could have told us, without hypocrisy and without loss of personal dignity, what he has been criticized for. ...
>
> ...Let me add that the editors of the magazine which I represent here [Novy mir] unfortunately showed insufficient firmness, and even though they edited the novel together with Dudintsev, they did not fully see or try to convince the author that his novel's extremely one-sided picture of our society required substantial revision.[11]

The storm of criticism continued. The editors of Novy mir were accused of making a "grave" error in publishing the book. The First Secretary of the Party, Khrushchev, even took time out to censure the book; in a speech to a gathering of writers, he stated:

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11 Literaturnaia gazeta, March 19, 1957; trans. in CDSP, IX (13) (May 8, 1957), 23.

> ...But what happens to some men of letters when they take up the cudgels to criticise shortcomings? Being ignorant of life and having no adequate political experience or ability to see the main determining factor in life, they seize on the defects and mistakes of this or that worker, pile them all up higgledy-piggledy, without rhyme or reason, in a single heap, get scared themselves and try to scare others.
>
> This was the unenviable position in which notably the writer V. Dudintsev landed. His book Not By Bread Alone, which reactionary forces abroad are now trying to use against us, contains tendentiously selected negative facts interpreted with an approach that is biased and unfriendly. Dudintsev's book has, it is true, pages that are correctly and forcefully written, but its general trend is basically wrong. The reader gets the impression that the author of the book does not care about having the shortcomings he sees in our life removed, that he deliberately exaggerates the shortcomings and rubs his hands over them with malicious glee. This approach to the presentation of reality in works of literature and art is nothing short of a craving to misrepresent reality, as it were through a distorting mirror.[12]

After such strong condemnation from the mouth of the Party chief, Dudintsev thought it advisable to capitulate; he "admitted that the critical reactions of

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12 N. S. Khrushchov, "Literature, The Arts, and the Life of the People" (Pamphlet) (London: Soviet News, 1957), pp. 22-23.

the Soviet public to his novel Not by Bread Alone were entirely correct and justified" and declared his intention to write better in the future in order to justify the confidence placed in him by his fellow-writers.[13] Thus, the writers who criticized the book finally triumphed over those who had praised it, but only after the Party had intervened decisively on their side.

Summary and Evaluation of the Criticism

All of the negative criticisms that were levelled at the book can be reduced to four main points. Firstly, it was written in a biased, one-sided manner and showed the triumph of bureaucrats over honest, conscientious citizens; this fact resulted in a sense of gloom being spread at home and the book becoming a weapon of reactionaries abroad. Secondly, the positive characters portrayed were unworthy. Thirdly, the motif of solitude was present throughout. Fourthly, the book was unevenly and inartistically written.

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13 Vecherniaia Moskva, December 6, 1957; trans. in CDSP, X (5) (March 12, 1957), 39.

On the other hand, those that had favoured the book did so on the following basis. They declared the work to be a truthful portrayal of reality, an exposé of bureaucracy with a view to eliminating it. They expressed the view that all characters were well drawn, that the success of Lopatkin at the end of the book showed the triumph of the progressive forces and belief in the future. Finally, the work was permeated with a love for the simple man and ordinary people.

In my opinion, something could be said for both arguments. With regard to the first point, the book is basically a condemnation of bureaucracy and bureaucratic methods, inherent in the persons of Drozdov and Shutikov; the unimaginative routine, and the impersonal, sterile character of these characters are contrasted to the individual, creative personality of the hero who fights them. It is true, as the novel's opponents contend, that a sense of gloom is present in the book, especially in some pronouncements of old Professor Busko; for example:

> Ah, yes, hope. Do you know what Diesel said about it? He said: the older one gets, the less disappointment one suffers. Because one loses the habit of hoping. Hopes are cherished only by youngsters.[14]

and again:

> The trouble is that between us and that man [the man who will appreciate genuine inventions] there is a middle-man of imposing presence who regards himself as a devotee of science, as a servant of the state. He lectures conscientiously, year after year, always with the same text, gives expert opinions, writes reviews. Or else he is a gloomy departmental head, content to die-stamp the same aluminum spoon for a thousand years; naturally fulfilling the plan to the extent of one hundred and two per cent! These people stand between us and the genuine common man, who, by the way, would be glad to have your pipes and my fire extinguisher.[15]

However, through the words of Nadia and Galitsky, Dudintsev summons the people to fight the evil in their midst; Nadia states:

> ...But if you love your country... Why are we ashamed of talking about such things? In the war we talked about them... Because then there was danger. But I think now, too, there is

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14 Dudintsev, op. cit., p. 197.

15 Ibid., p. 212.

> danger... Because the root of what we are fighting still lives, resists, and is growing. You must carry on with the work the country needs, even if it rejects your achievements. Even when it condemns you out of the mouth of those of its servants and judges who pronounce unjust sentences in its name. Your service will carry weight only if you can achieve what now appears impossible.[16]

Galitsky declares his intention of fighting the bureaucrats to the bitter end:

> ...If you pack up, I shall have a go at them myself. No, friend! While this gang sits round the fleshpots, I shall have no peace. Now they have arranged to write a new textbook. To stuff all sorts of nonsense into the students' heads. "Avdiyev, Tepikin, and other prominent scientists!" Oh, no, friend! I'll pull these Saracens off their high horse![17]

It is true that statements expressing the intention of fighting the bureaucrats are much less in evidence than the feeling of helplessness and defeat before the almost insurmountable obstacles which they have created. However, in all fairness to Dudintsev, it must be admitted

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16 Ibid., p. 313.

17 Ibid., pp. 449-450.

that he is definitely on the side of right in the novel; he has lovingly and sympathetically portrayed his hero and has been successful in making the bureaucrats appear hateful and repugnant, even if he has failed to impress on the reader the idea that the downfall of such people is inevitable.

Both those for and against the book are partially right in their views on characterization. The criticisms of the positive characters in the story are to some extent justified; Lopatkin, however, is not deserving of the criticism levelled at him. It is indeed true that the inventor is fighting virtually alone against the bureaucrats. However, one senses that this individual approach is not of the hero's choosing. He is repeatedly condemned and ridiculed by the negative characters for being an individualist; for example, Drozdov, amused, pokes fun at him:

> Look here, Comrade Lopatkin, if I were a writer, I should write a novel about you. Because you

> are a truly tragic figure embodying within yourself... a whole epoch, which by now is irretrievably past and gone. You are a hero, but a solitary one... If statesmanlike calculations make it necessary to put on the agenda the task... which you are trying to fulfill by yourself... Our designers' and technicians' collectives will find a solution. And this solution will be better than yours, because collective research always leads to the quickest and best solution of any problem. The collective is superior to any individual genius.[18]

Even Galitsky upbraids the hero for his "go it alone" policy:

> There is, however, in your idea, comrade originator, one merciless "but," which is the result of your, as one might say, hermit way of life. It is absolutely essential for thoughts to be cross-fertilized with other thoughts, otherwise they degenerate.[19]

However, Lopatkin more than justifies himself in answering the charges of individualism and at the same time speaks out against the people who are preventing acceptance of his machine:

> ...I am not an engineer, I am a schoolmaster in a secondary school. In our school

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18 Ibid., p. 173.

19 Ibid., p. 159.

> no one except myself has any ideas about centrifugal casting and so there is no one with whom I could "cross-fertilize my thoughts", as Comrade Galitsky demands!
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> Do you really think it right that anyone who stumbles on to a new idea and wants to give it to the nation--is it really right to denounce him as an anti-social element? To make jokes of this sort at his expense?...
>
> I would have tried to "cross-fertilize thoughts"... I am continually aware of my deficiencies as a designer and metallurgist. But Professor Avdiyev had no such desire. He said it was all a "fiction", and that that was all there was to it.[20]

More could be said for the view that Professor Busko is not worthy of being a positive hero. Although the old man is a likeable, idealistic, at times amusing individual, his despair, hopelessness, distrust and suspicion, though to some extent understandable in the light of difficulties which he has experienced during his lifetime, do not stand to his credit.

One can apply the same terms to Arakhovsky, who

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20 Ibid., p. 160

in effect has given up the battle with the bureaucrats and wastes his talents of invention on fishing tackle gadgets.

Those critics who opposed the book have a point when they declare that a theme of solitude permeates the novel; this circumstance seems to intensify the feeling of despondency and gloom which is present. At the first of the novel Lopatkin is befriended by solitary persons, Pete Sianov and Vera Pavlovna, later he strikes up a friendship with Arakhovsky, a lone individual who has no personal ties with his co-workers, and finally he spends most of his time in Moscow with Professor Busko closed up in a little room away from the outside world. This apartness gives one the impression that Lopatkin is waging a lone and losing battle against a force of bureaucrats, incomparably superior in strength to himself and that the people either are passive bystanders or are even distrustful of his intentions. This opinion is clearly supported by a statement made

by the secretary of the Minister, a conscientious and honest Soviet citizen,who, after hearing of Lopatkin's attitude towards Shutikov's pipes, which have been produced on the wasteful Uriupin machine, indignantly upbraids the hero:

> ...One really cannot be as selfish as all that. After all, machines are not made for your sake, but for the people's, for the community. I could never have behaved as you did. I would have congratulated them. They have made the machine and good luck to them. How could you? I should never have believed that you... !21

The claim that the book inspires the reader with confidence in the future is correct to some extent as the hero eventually achieves success; however, to all intents and purposes, the fact that the chief bureaucrats escape unpunished has the opposite effect of making the reader pessimistic about the future.

After the difficulties experienced by Lopatkin,

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21 Ibid., p. 328.

his eventual success in having his machine made does not seem to be really convincing. Three reasons can be given in support of this contention. Firstly, the succession of failures experienced by the hero leads the reader to doubt the possibility of success, and therefore, the eventual production of the machine comes as a surprise. Secondly, the suddenness with which this event is described and passed over lessens, to a considerable extent, the reader's acceptance of the event. Finally, as a result of these two points, the reader comes to the conclusion that Dudintsev was thinking of the necessity of showing the triumph of good over evil, as demanded by the method of socialist realism, when he wrote the concluding chapters of his novel.

The proponents of the book rightly state that it is filled with love for the little man. The reader cannot help admiring and loving Lopatkin, who, despite tremendous odds, persists in his attempts to do his people a service and eventually wins through in the end.

Lopatkin, though a Communist in his outlook, is not a one-hundred per cent materialist; he is also a visionary, an idealist, who wants to live "not by bread alone":

> I never did believe in vulgar Communism... Those who think that under Communism everyone will strut around in cloth-of-gold are mistaken. The petty bourgeois whose heart is in the good things of life expects from Communism merely the filling of his belly. But in true Communism, many objects of crazy luxury, born out of the idleness of the rich, will be abolished...
>
> ...When I realized the significance of this machine and understood that it was needed, and that for its sake I should have to draw in my belt, I did not hesitate for an instant, but jumped gladly into this cold water... To the last hole! See? Then I suddenly understood that Communism is not a construction thought out by the philosophers, but a force which has existed for a long time and which is covertly training cadres for a future society. This force has already entered me. How did I come to feel it? Like this! Never in my life have I worked as I am working now. I am working to capacity. Without ever looking back. I save time for no other purpose but for my work... I don't want that sort of happiness, the kind one sees in the movies: good food and plenty of it, a nice flat, a bedroom suite, lace petticoats... That is, of course, I would not refuse them. But if I had only those things I should not be happy. But if I get this job through to its conclusion, I shall be happy, even if I have no bedroom suite![22]

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22 Ibid., p. 213.

The contention that the book was written unevenly also contains some truth; the final portion is indeed written in a hurried manner. Nevertheless, the fine narrative and delineation of characters in addition to the constant interest which holds the reader offset, to a great extent, this shortcoming.

Conclusion

Dudintsev's novel is of great importance in studying Soviet policies towards literature in the period after 1953. After the stereotyped "embellishing" plots that were the rule in the zhdanovshchina period, a novel of this type, focussing attention on such a touchy theme and containing such an outspoken criticism of Soviet bureaucracy, was a refreshing thing. It is no wonder that this book above all others in this period (with the possible exception of Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago) held the most interest for foreign scholars of Soviet literature.

The reasons for the official Party condemnation of the novel can only be speculated upon. As has been previously stated, Khrushchev's attack on Stalin was not meant as a blanket condemnation of all things that had taken place under the latter's leadership; the new view was to the effect that the leader alone was to blame for the emergence of evil phenomena, while the Party and State organs did not deviate from the true Leninist path. Dudintsev's criticism of the bureaucrats also tended to include whole Soviet ministries and other authorities and therefore his book was deserving of criticism.

Another view that has been expressed is that the Party did not take a stand at the outset because it believed that the effect of de-Stalinization in literary affairs would not be very pronounced. However, the book had been published abroad and had been highly praised as showing the actual state of Soviet society. In addition to this circumstance, the events in Poland

and Hungary had taken place largely on the initiative of the intelligentsia, which included the active participation of the writers and their student readers. Therefore, the Party in the Soviet Union must have felt extremely uneasy about the Soviet writers' future behaviour and therefore decided that condemnation of Dudintsev's book and a return to ideological militancy were called for.[23] Whatever the cause, the condemnation of Not by Bread Alone and other critical works of this period led to a notable tightening of Party direction in the literary field and some writers, who perhaps had the same urge as Dudintsev to expose the darker things in Soviet society, thought the better of it and restrained themselves.

It does not appear that anything has happened to Dudintsev as a result of Not by Bread Alone; after his public admission that he had made mistakes in writing the novel, he has been continuing his career as before.

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23 Vladimir Shabinsky, Ostlicht: Russische Lyrik und Prosa 1956-1957 , trans. Karina Bokownew and Konrad Korten (Munich, 1958), 18.

The relatively light treatment of Dudintsev in this case markedly contrasts with the severe reprimands meted out to errant writers during the "hey-day" of zhdanovshchina. The reason for this fact is easily discernible. Dudintsev, as a devoted Party member and hero of the Second World War, would hardly knowingly and intentionally criticize shortcomings with "malicious glee", to use Khrushchev's own words. It is significant to note that most of the people who were opposed to the book, and these include Khrushchev and Simonov, a writer of considerable influence in the Soviet literary sphere today, generally prefaced their critical remarks with a statement to the following effect: Dudintsev, a young and relatively inexperienced writer, had good intentions in mind when he wrote the novel, but unfortunately he got carried away with his descriptions of shortcomings. The end result was a slanderous and harmful novel.

CHAPTER IV

SOVIET LITERARY POLICIES 1957-1958

THE CORRECT APPROACH: OVECHKIN AND KOCHETOV

In preceding chapters of this work, Soviet policies towards literature have been traced during the years 1953-1956, and novels have been dealt with which, due to their descriptions of negative phenomena in Soviet life, have been officially condemned by the Party. In this chapter, prior to a consideration of the important events that occurred in the Soviet literary sphere during the years 1957 and 1958, two particular works, V. Ovechkin's Trudnaia vesna (A Difficult Spring) and V. Kochetov's Brat'ia Ershovy (The Ershov Brothers) will be discussed, both of which have been highly praised by official literary circles for the abundance of socialist realism qualities they contain, and will therefore illustrate what was desired by the Party of writers during these years.

Ovechkin and A Difficult Spring

Valentin Ovechkin, a writer who is virtually unknown in the West, is by contrast well-known to Soviet

readers for his lively works dealing with collective-farm themes. He is primarily an essayist and short-story writer and his works in some measure resemble journalistic articles. Ovechkin has always been a favourite with the Party for several reasons: he is a devoted and trusted Party member; he "lives the life of the people", so to speak, insofar as his home is in the country near Kursk--a fact that coincides with the Party's desire that writers be close to the people; he takes as prototypes for the characters of his stories actual people whom he has known and observed during their daily work on kolkhozes (collective-farms) and machine-tractor stations around Kursk; his stories deal with concrete agricultural problems and are filled with suggestions for improving conditions and working methods on the farm, and are therefore considered to be educational; and finally, he criticizes malpractices but in such a way that progressive forces are shown as greatly superior in vigour and in strength to backward and retarding influences and are always victorious in the end.

The story, A Difficult Spring, was published in 1956 and dealt with many important problems in connection with Soviet agriculture. A summary of the main topics discussed in the book follows.

Firstly, the necessity of improving conditions on the backward kolkhozes has led the hero, Martynov, a first secretary of a district Party Committee, to implement a plan which he believes will solve the problem. He has, through persuasion and a call to patriotic duty, succeeded in replacing the chairmen of the backward kolkhozes under his supervision with highly-trained officials from local State and Party institutions. Dolgushin, the conscientious, efficient, Party-minded director of a machine-tractor station (MTS) in the district, who shares the hero's mantle in this story due to Martynov's prolonged incapacitation, correctly declares that Martynov's scheme is a negation of the idea that promotion should proceed from below upwards; nevertheless he admits that in some cases normal promotion procedures combined with such a "shaking

up of the bureaucratic hierarchy" would be a good thing.

Secondly, in a general attack on bureaucracy, Ovechkin, through the words of Martynov, describes the evil inherent in maintaining overly-large, unwieldy staffs of personnel which was the case with many State organs since the time of Stalin:

> And the main evil here, in my opinion, does not even lie in the fact...that we squander extra millions of rubles in wages for administrative workers. These are material losses. But for overly-large staffs we pay something which is dearer than any money. We spoil people and incorrectly educate our cadres. It takes ten men to sign some kind of important document, and no one will permit himself to be the first to say "yes" or "no". They hide behind each other. There is someone who will do the hiding and someone to hide behind. Overcautiousness and a lack of responsibility--are what the people are attracted to in places where there are enormous staffs. A cutting down of the apparatus is necessary as a first step but for its own, the apparatus' benefit! For the improvement of its work.[1]

The same point was made by Khrushchev in his policy of sending many of the white-collar workers of enlarged

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1 Valentin Ovechkin, Trudnaia vesna (Moscow, 1956), p. 190.

State bodies to the country to perform more productive work.

Thirdly, bureaucratic methods and practices are effectively described and condemned by the author; for this purpose he uses the bureaucratic character, second secretary Medved'ev.

Fourthly, Ovechkin makes reference to workers' "socialist obligations". Among some kolkhoz and MTS workers the practice of declaring exhorbitant and unrealistic norms, merely for impressiveness and the sake of publicity, had become prevalent. This behaviour had been followed on one particular MTS prior to Dolgushin's taking over as its director. This forceful character immediately puts an end to this harmful practice and impresses on his workers the need to be realistic and truthful concerning their pledges of work and that they should make every effort to fulfill them.

Fifthly, the author provides the desired Soviet aggressive hero. Dolgushin, through his exemplary behaviour,

serves as an example for Soviet people to emulate:

> ...Dolgushin simply wants us all, from all sides, to strive towards one point, to go towards one goal--towards the raising of the kolkhozes. He is one of those Communists who, no matter what work you give him--will do his job only in the Party way. He cannot think of the economy without thinking of the Party and the education of the people. This is rooted in his flesh and blood. Whenever he is at a kolkhoz, he interests himself with the work of the Komsomol members and drops into the club and the children's creches. At our Party meeting he raised the question of creating a circle for artistic activity from the workers of the MTS.[2]

Sixthly, Ovechkin, through Dolgushin, criticizes kolkhoz chairmen for being more concerned about the living conditions of the farm animals than those of their own workers; he upbraids Openkin, the conscientious chairman of an advanced kolkhoz, who is guilty only of this one shortcoming:

> ...Without good accomodation and care you will not obtain high production from animal-breeding. And all this-is the common income of the kolkhoz, which is allotted to all kolkhoz farmers according to their work-days. All this is understandable. But nevertheless it somehow strangely occurs that the domestic animals' living conditions

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2 Ibid., p. 289.

> correspond to their requirements--they are arranged somehow more culturally than are the living conditions of the masters of these animals--the people. Is it possible that it should be like this forever? All the same you know that we ride on the horses, and not the horses on us! The cows--are for our benefit, we are not--for the benefit of the cows! I believe, Demian Vasilievich, that your cows, in thanks for your humane treatment of them, have already earned for the kolkhoz sufficient money to enable their masters to have spacious, multi-roomed houses, with the required cubic air-space. It's already possible for you to build a new village. Of course these will not be capital expenditures that immediately produce a turnover for the kolkhoz. Perhaps you will not get back "three rubles for one" here, but you will receive something else--a good life for your people.[3]

As a seventh point, the author makes reference to the purges of the thirties; in doing this he was supporting Khrushchev's claim that many iniquities were perpetrated during these years under Stalin's leadership. After a plenary meeting of the District Party Committee over which the bureaucrat Medved'ev has presided in a haughty and arbitrary manner, Glotov, another MTS director, grimly counters him with the following words:

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3 Ibid., pp. 341-342.

> ...In 1937 you, evidently, were still a boy who chased pigeons, but if you were in power at that time, oho!--what you would have done at that time! You would have put more than one dozen people in prison![4]

Finally, Ovechkin describes the great improvement in the state of agriculture since the death of Stalin and he attributes it to Khrushchev's agricultural policy; Krylov, secretary of the Provincial Party Committee, tells Martynov:

> We have successfully awaited wonderful decisions in agriculture-that, about which you and I, Comrade Martynov, could only dream a few years ago... What is the lowering of taxes and deliveries from the kolkhozes worth by itself? We even feared to speak about this, but the government without our petitions has taken this step. And what decisions on personnel, on material and technical supply! You can well imagine that I suffered from official optimism, but, truly, we now have all the basis to look at life everywhere in a more happy fashion![5]

Ovechkin was also praised for exposing the bureaucratic behaviour of some agricultural officials, the

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4 Ibid., pp. 350-351.

5 Ibid., p. 376.

inefficient handling of the supply problem and the corruption existing on backward kolkhozes, a state brought about by bribery, drunkenness, and poor management.

Ovechkin's book is a militant guide to action for agricultural workers. It is a fine example of socialist realism writing as it contains almost all the requisites that this literary method demands. Ovechkin's daily contacts with collective-farm personnel and his first-hand knowledge of their problems enabled him to portray a concrete, truthful picture of Soviet agricultural life. The outlook and tone of the story is optimistic. Life is shown as a changing process with bad conditions being steadily eliminated through the forthright actions of Dolgushin and Martynov. The book educates the reader in the socialist spirit in the sense that it sets up as examples worthy of imitation the exemplary deeds of the positive characters, and, in addition, it provides the correct interpretation and solutions of day-to-day agricultural problems. The theme, which deals with the

life of ordinary kolkhozniks (collective-farmers), is certainly rich in narodnost', while partiinost' is the distinguishing quality in the character makeup of the two heroes; the constant references to the Party's attitude towards the problems discussed and the praise of the new Khrushchev agricultural policy are also examples of Party spirit.

With no exceptions, all Soviet criticism of the book was favourable. With reference to Ovechkin's Raionnye budni (District Routine), a story to which A Difficult Spring is a sequel, A. Tarasenkov has high words of praise for the author:

> ...His [Ovechkin's] journalism, his hot and impatient desire to call things by their right names, is a legitimate artistic method, a powerful and individual method, a legitimate part of the story-teller's arsenal. ...
>
> The power of Ovechkin's angry, satirical condemnation comes from the author's deep and thorough presentation of the good which underlies our life.
>
> His Martynov is the personification of genuine Party thought and genuine Party work. He is not only purer, better and nobler than Borzov [the former first secretary of the District

> Committee]--he is incomparably stronger, and Ovechkin shows this graphically and concretely.
>
> Ovechkin says that his portraits of people are "taken from life." But behind the external authenticity lies a second and far stronger factor: authenticity in typing. The contrasting characters in Ovechkin's story show two diametrically opposed forces in our society clashing: the power of indifference and egoism and the power of socialist humanism.[6]

The critic, V. Ozerov, in Komsomol'skaia pravda, contrasts Ovechkin's criticism to the kind found in Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone:

> This spirit of affirmation of the power and victoriousness of the new relations is lacking in such works as, say, Dudintsev's novel "Not by Bread Alone," which has thereby become particularly vulnerable. The recognition of the constructive character of socialist realism stems from the duty and obligation of the Soviet writer not merely to point out defects, but to inspire the people with the objective pursued, to capture their enthusiasms with a living example, and consequently to strike with particular force at everything useless and inimical...
>
> The authors of the best works of modern Soviet literature feel they play precisely this role. It is difficult, for instance, to find an author who attacks economic and social injustice as bitterly as Ovechkin...But his

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6 Izvestiia, November 23, 1954; trans. in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, hereafter cited as CDSP, VI (47) (January 5, 1955), 7.

> criticism by no means causes a sense of helpless despondency; it does not debilitate the reader, but mobilizes his energy and initiative. Why is this so? Because Ovechkin carefully explores life and proposes ways for its improvement, arms us with the prospect of development. ...[7]

The character, Martynov, is favourably mentioned in the report of the secretariat of the USSR Writers' Union at its third plenary session in May, 1957: "Portrayals of Bolshevik leaders such as V. Ovechkin's Martynov, ...render a great service to Soviet literature."[8]

At the Third Congress of Soviet Writers in 1959 A. Surkov also praised Ovechkin highly:

> The success of Valentin Ovechkin's books "District Routine" and "A Difficult Spring" is to be explained by the fact that the author has availed himself of the chief qualities inherent in the sketch: acute timeliness, the capacity for taking the initiative in boldly proposing important new problems for public discussion, and the author's avid interest in removing all obstacles from the path of forward progress.[9]

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7 Komsomol'skaia pravda, Jan. 25, 1957; cond. and trans. in CDSP, IX (8) (April 3, 1957), 27.

8 Literaturnaia gazeta, May 16, 1957; exc. and trans. in CDSP, IX (21) (July 3, 1957), 14.

9 Pravda, May 19, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (20) (June 17, 1959), 11.

However, despite all the praise the book received from Soviet critics, to the foreign reader it leaves much to be desired. The theme, which constantly deals with work and work problems to the utter neglect of personal relationships and experiences, makes the book monotonous and dull. The characters are portrayed too one-sidedly. The book is merely a narration of ordinary daily happenings, a sort of calendar of duties of District Party Committee Secretary Martynov. I would venture to say that Kochetov's The Zhurbins, referred to previously in connection with the zhdanovshchina period, despite its obvious shortcomings, contains more of a plot and provides more interest than A Difficult Spring.

Kochetov and The Ershov Brothers

Kochetov's novel is of great significance in any consideration of Soviet policies towards literature for various reasons: it has been hailed in the Soviet Union as an outstanding achievement; it is considered one of

the best books to appear in recent years; it has been set up by official literary circles as an answer to Dudintsev's novel. A brief sketch of Kochetov's life should prove of considerable interest to the reader; surprisingly, the biographies of Dudintsev and Kochetov have followed similar lines.

Vsevolod Kochetov was born in the ancient city of Novgorod in 1912. At age thirteen he moved to Leningrad, finished secondary school, worked in a shipyard for a time, and entered an agricultural college; he left this college before he had completed his studies in order to participate in the collectivization which was then taking place. After working in the country as an agronomist for five years, he entered an agricultural experimental station for the purpose of doing research. The turning point in his life came in 1938 when he started his writing career; he edited an agricultural section of a newspaper. He greatly enjoyed this job from the start. Then for a time he served as a reporter on the Leningradskaia pravda

and during the Second World War was a war correspondent in Leningrad. In 1946 his first story, On the Neva Plains, was written. Another story, The Suburb, dealing with the war around Leningrad, appeared in 1947. However, Kochetov first achieved real distinction and fame when he wrote The Zhurbins, a novel which was considered a real success of socialist realism during the zhdanovshchina period. In 1954 Kochetov's novel, Youth Is With Us, was published; it was considered a step backward from the standard he had reached in his previous novel. However, during the years 1956 and 1957 Kochetov wrote The Ershov Brothers which was received with as much enthusiasm as had been the case with The Zhurbins. A discussion of this book, which has been held up as a fine example of recent Soviet literature, follows.

The Ershov Brothers encompasses a short period in the lives of some Soviet metallurgical and intellectual workers. Two conflicting forces are represented in the work. On the one hand, the characters Orleantsev, Krutilich, Vorobeiny, and Tomashuk are exponents of the

old and decadent in Soviet society, while on the other hand, the new, progressive, and triumphant is inherent in the Ershov brothers, Dmitri, Platon, Iakov, and Stepan, their nephew, Andrei, and the other characters Guliaev, Iskra and Vitalii Kozakov, Kapa, and Zoia Petrovna.

The story consists of two interwoven plots. The primary plot concerns metallurgical workers and describes the intrigues and machinations of Orleantsev, a talented, clever, scheming careerist, whose only interest is to get ahead. In his attempts to climb the ladder of success he uses as pawns in his schemes the bogus inventor, Krutilich, and Vorobeiny, a former soldier in the army of the Soviet renegade, General Vlasov. Various undesirable occurrences are effected chiefly by Orleantsev. For example, Platon Ershov, chief foreman at the plant and a man who is respected by all, is forced into retirement and his place is filled by the turncoat Vorobeiny. Through the efforts of Orleantsev, Krutilich is made deputy chief of the rationalizing section of the plant;

in this capacity he attempts to appropriate the useful invention of the engineer, Iskra Kozakova. His crime almost succeeds due to the fact that Zoia Petrovna, the secretary of the plant manager and an honest and conscientious Soviet worker, is corrupted by Orleantsev and is used to support Krutilich's claims. However, after a determined struggle between the good and bad forces, a struggle in which the latter appear headed for victory, the side of right triumphs. Zoia Petrovna, who has been silent almost up to the end, exposes the falseness of Krutilich's claim to Iskra's invention, and also reveals Orleantsev's main part in the crime.

A secondary plot deals with the toiling intelligentsia. The theatre, mainly because of its director, Tomashuk, has been producing monotonous, unrealistic plays for a long time. Guliaev, the chief actor, acquiesces in this unhappy state of affairs for a time, but eventually he has had all he can take and rebels. In his struggle with Tomashuk, he, as the representative of true Soviet

art, has the support of the theatre manager, Iakov Ershov, other progressive-minded theatrical workers, and the painter, Vitalii Kozakov. In the end, Guliaev is the victor. A play typifying socialist realism, which is patterned on the life of the father of the Ershov brothers, is produced on the stage, despite Tomashuk's protests, and it is enthusiastically received.

Before considering the official Party evaluation and criticism of the book, it would be worthwhile to discuss the relationship between this novel and Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone, insofar as the two have been contrasted to each other by Party-minded literary critics.

Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone had expressed the view that in Soviet society a truly gifted man would find it difficult to persevere in any purpose if he were opposed by bureaucrats in authority. He used his idealist inventor, Lopatkin, to illustrate this point. It is significant to note that Kochetov, in answering Dudintsev, also makes use of an inventor as one of his major

characters; however, in this case, he is depicted as a despicable, talentless failure and plagiarizer. In the following passage Kochetov appears to ridicule inventors in general (perhaps a jeer at Lopatkin?) and Krutilich in particular:

> ...When Orleantsev worked on the central board, Krutilich's fellow-workers very often used to come to him, they accused him [Krutilich] of bureaucratism, of wanting to appropriate their inventions, they even accused him of wrecking activities. Some of these inventors prospered as they knew how to skilfully conclude agreements for the introduction of their ugly and useless mechanical creations; the less resourceful hardly made ends meet, a third [group] simply lived in poverty. But such a beggar as the one who appeared before him this evening [Krutilich], Orleantsev had not yet met.[10]

If Kochetov's purpose was to refute the ideas expressed by Dudintsev, he used the wrong approach. The following example will illustrate this fact. Krutilich has been made deputy chief of the innovators' and rationalizers' section of the plant; in his new position

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10 Vsevolod Kochetov, Brat'ia Ershovy (Moscow, 1959), p. 83.

the malicious attitude he displays and his shelving of all meritorious proposals resemble the actions not of the idealist, Lopatkin, in Dudintsev's story, but of the bureaucrats in the Avdiyev crowd. The following lines describe Krutilich at work:

> ...He was overjoyed when he saw that a proposal was either incorrect in its plan, illiterate technically, or such a trifle that it did not even deserve consideration. For such proposals he wrote detailed comments, he reported them to the manager, he told his fellow office workers about them as if they were anecdotes, or he went to Orleantsev to jeeringly tell him: here you are, they say, what titans of the intellect, what giants! Businesslike, circumstantial, valuable proposals irritated and embittered him. He put them to the side: "Never mind, my dear fellows--he thought with reference to the authors--you'll wait a while". He remembered those deprivations, which he himself had experienced in life, and he was prepared to do everything to see that others would go from deprivation to deprivation. He hated fortunate and successful people, and he considered as fortunate and successful all those who worked well and received good remuneration for their labors, all those who had done something well-conceived, all those who succeeded in doing anything at all above that which was demanded by their job.[11]

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11 Ibid., pp. 276-277.

The reader continually feels that Kochetov is consciously trying to make his inventor, Krutilich, as repulsive as possible. In contrast to Lopatkin's trying experiences with the powers that be, Kochetov shows the authorities' support for Krutilich, unworthy though he is, and their acceptance of his claim that his inventions are being ignored. This action is intended to illustrate the receptiveness of the Party to all inventions and innovations, even if they should prove worthless. In addition, it shows that an inventor always has the Party behind him in any fight against bureaucrats.

Like Ovechkin's book, this novel is written in the spirit of socialist realism in the fullest meaning of this term. Its theme is a contemporary one dealing with the workers and the intelligentsia. The forces of right are depicted as incomparably stronger than the evil influences. Life is described in its continous development in which survivals of the bourgeois past are steadily removed. There are many lines which are rich in partiinost'; for example, Platon Ershov, a real Party man,

declares in regard to his brother:

> Our Dmitri is an iron man...among other things, he declared at one time while he was still a member of the Komsomol...and perhaps when he was still in the Pioneers, I have forgotten. Here is what he stated: after I have lived to see world communism, only then will you bury me.[12]

In a similar Party vein, Kochetov clearly voices and praises the Khrushchev policy of a continued concentration on heavy industry; he opposed those who were in favour of Malenkov's shift to light industry with its resultant increase in consumer goods:

> At the conference much was said about how satisfying it was to read about the decisions of the Twentieth Congress words about heavy industry, about the fact that it was and remains the basis of the industrial development of the country, the basis of its economic and military might. On the other hand, all kinds of things were jabbered about prior to the congress--say, the time has come when it's already possible to give a preference to light industry, to production of the means of consumption, and not of the means of production.[13]

Note also the militant Party spirit in the following passage:

> Iskra Vasilievna spoke about the program

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12 Ibid., p. 141.

13 Ibid., p. 250.

> of moving towards communism, which the congress had planned, of the popular initiative, which the decisions of the congress are awakening, about the fact that one wants to work and work, about how joyful life is when you participate in the building, about which the people who follow us will sing songs and write poems.[14]

Party spirit in also prominent in the pronouncements dealing with the socialist realism method in the arts; in passages devoted to this theme, through the words of his characters, Kochetov expresses his own views on art. For example, the positive character, Guliaev, explains:

> ...It is said that there is no ideal hero. That he is harmful, he blinds and lulls one to sleep. But I feel that if he did not exist, then art would be obliged to invent him. It is impossible to live without ideals. Art is not photography, it can do everything, and it would be obliged to create an ideal hero. When I am told today that there is no ideal hero, I hear something else behind these words. I hear: you have busied yourselves thirty nine years with the education of the people, but a man remains as he was before, you have not known how to do anything with a man, comrades Bolsheviks. This is what I hear. And furthermore, where is the original source of these theories? There, beyond the seas!...But some of our wise men repeat that which is foreign. There ought to be such a hero, who would serve as an ideal for people, whom people would want

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14 Ibid., p. 220.

> to be like, whom they would imitate. There should be. The more so that there are thousands and millions of such heroes among us.[15]

Following Khrushchev's 1956 speech, the view that art should be free of Party direction had its supporters. In a previous chapter, mention was made of this state of affairs, which even reached the point in some quarters of calling for a complete abolition of socialist realism. The official Party attitude to this view is expressed in the thoughts and musings of Party secretary Gorbachev:

> ...Some queer birds [after the Twentieth Congress] started to shout about freeing art from any kind of responsibility. They were namely queer birds, one cannot call them otherwise. But could it be that they think that art, "freed" from the guidance of the Party, is capable of existing "by itself"? That the bourgeois ideology will not start an assault on it? The bourgeois ideology has still preserved its tenacity and cunning, its tactics, due to the fact that it skilfully and subtily corrupts a man, brings him up as an individualist and grabber. There, where it [bourgeois ideology] exists, it has subordinated everything to this purpose--literature, the theatre, the cinema, painting, all types of entertainment and amusement.[16]

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15 Ibid., p. 258.

16 Ibid., p. 341.

The novel was highly praised by Soviet critics immediately after its publication. V. Mikhailov, in his review of the book in Pravda, listed the following points as worthy of praise: the new and progressive triumphs over the forces impeding progress; the novel is polemical and exposes such harmful men as Orleantsev, but also shows the inevitability of their downfall; the characters, Kapa Gorbacheva and Andrei Ershov, are fine representatives of the Soviet younger generation; through his portrayal of representatives of the intelligentsia the author gives his own views on art and the necessity of writing in the spirit of socialist realism; "the main ideological emphasis of the novel makes it of use in the ideological struggle against various influences of the reactionary ideology of the capitalist West." In addition, Mikhailov also had some minor criticisms to make: the motives for some actions are not entirely convincing; the author has failed to combine his discussion of current problems with a vivid portrayal of people's characters; the characters could have been more

sharply drawn; and the concern with present day events sometimes reduces the story to "shallow discourses" on various topics.[17]

This largely favourable review was followed by other articles expressing a similar opinion; for example, the critics A. Polikanov and L. Ivanova in an article in Literatura i zhizn' stated:

> ...But all those who spoke [at the discussion in the Central Writers' Club in Moscow on September 25th] were unanimous in their recognition of the great ideological importance of V. Kochetov's novel for our times.
>
> A bold penetration into life, a sharp presentation of the most urgent problems of today, a fine publicist spirit and a polemic bent--all this, stemming from V. Kochetov's militant Party stand, characterizes the writer's new novel.[18]

It is significant to note that these critics opposed as too one-sided previous evaluations of the novel. They maintained that the book's weak sides were generally not mentioned, and cited Mikhailov's review as the best

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17 Pravda, September 25, 1958; trans. in CDSP, X (39) (November 5, 1958), 4-5.

18 Literatura i zhizn', September 28, 1958; exc. and trans. in CDSP, X (39) (November 5, 1958), 5.

example of the book's evaluation; the main points of this article have been listed above. During the Stalin regime, high praise awarded a Party-favoured book would never have been criticized on any grounds; in the light of this fact it would appear that literary critics in the post-Stalin period have considerably more freedom in their evaluations.

Kochetov's book was a good example of the type of work that was expected of the Soviet writer following the official condemnation of books similar to Dudintsev's. It was also a conscious attempt to reveal and condemn as erroneous and harmful the attitude manifested by Dudintsev, Panova, and Ehrenburg in their novels. The appearance of such books as L. Sobolev's The Green Ray and V. Kozhevnikov's To Meet the Dawn and others, which were written in the same spirit as The Ershov Brothers, was a sign that the relatively liberal atmosphere was being replaced by a new period of socialist realism orthodoxy. Directly connected with this shift to sterner

literary policies were the changes which occurred in the political sphere from early 1957 to the end of 1958.

Soviet Literary Policies 1957 and 1958

Following the period of lively controversy among Soviet writers that took place during the latter part of 1956, an event that was unprecedented since the twenties, Soviet policies toward literature again became stable. The theories, which were held by some Soviet men of letters and which had their origins in the Khrushchev speech and the troubles in Hungary and Poland, calling for the freedom or at least partial freedom of literature and the arts from Party direction, were definitely discarded as bourgeois and alien.

A speech by Mykola Bazhan, a Ukrainian writer, at the third plenary session of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union in May, 1957, contained the new official Party attitude towards Stalin and the Soviet writers' whole-

hearted acceptance of this line, as well as an attack on recalcitrant writers:

> We have lived through a tense year. But there are and have been no reasons for hysteria or despair. Of the truly remarkable and great that we have created in the past 40 years nothing must go unappreciated, be destroyed or cast aside. Unfortunately, there are unstable people among our intellectuals who thought in a panic that we must re-evaluate all our values and move all the landmarks. The question of J. V. Stalin the individual leader was improperly understood. Many zealous editors went so far as to cross Stalin's name out of our works. One Moscow writer declared that he was proud of the fact that Stalin's name was not mentioned in a single work of his. But there is nothing to be proud of in that.
>
> To cross off everything good that Stalin did, to cross out the whole path we traveled, believing in Stalin as the incarnation of our dreams and ideals, seeing in Stalin the incarnation of Party will and Party leadership, would be unworthy of honest Soviet people and honest Soviet writers. ...[19]

In mid-1957 various speeches on the arts, made by none other than Party Secretary Khrushchev himself, rank as events of great importance in the study of Soviet

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19 Literaturnaia gazeta, May 21, 1957; exc. and trans. in CDSP, IX (22) (July 10, 1957), 6.

literary policies during the post-Stalin period. In addition to considering and condemning various "unhealthy" manifestations of bourgeois ideology and influences that had appeared in the Soviet literary sphere during the difficult year of 1956, Khrushchev clearly stated the view that Soviet literature was, is, and will always be tied to the people through its Communist Party. Concerning the difficulties experienced in Soviet literature following the revelations about Stalin, the Party Secretary admitted that such did indeed exist and he explained them in the following terms:

> How is one to explain the way in which certain representatives of literature and art have staggered and wavered? I think that this happened because some of our comrades had a one-sided and incorrect understanding of the essence of the Party's criticism of the Stalin personality cult. They tried to interpret this criticism as a sweeping denial of Stalin's positive role in the life of our Party and country, and took the wrong path of searching in a prejudiced way solely among the darker aspects and errors in the history of our people's struggle for the triumph of socialism, ignoring the epoch-making successes of the Soviet state in building socialism.[20]

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20 N. S. Khrushchov, "Literature, The Arts, and the Life of the People" (Pamphlet) (London: Soviet News, 1957), p. 16.

Referring generally to all writers who had not adhered firmly to partiinost' in their works during the preceding months and perhaps with an eye towards Dudintsev in particular, Khrushchev added:

> We must confess, comrades, that there are still some of our writers and artists who now and again slip off firm ground and stray from the right track. They present the tasks of literature and art in an erroneous and distorted way. They try to present matters as if it were the duty of literature and art to see only faults and to speak mainly about the negative aspects of life and about things that go wrong, and to keep silent about anything that is good. But it is the good, the new and the progressive in life that is the main thing in the rapidly developing reality of socialist society.[21]

Then he made his famous, subsequently much-quoted remark on the necessity of a writer to always be closely tied to the Party:

> ...The strength of socialist society lies in the fact that the Communist Party and the people are one...Anyone who wants to be with the people will always be with the Party. Anyone who firmly adheres to the Party's positions [italics mine-J. L.] will always be with the people.[22]

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21 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

22 Ibid., p. 24.

After branding as un-Leninist those writers who had declared themselves in favour of literature not controlled by the Party, Khrushchev ended his talks by calling for all people of the arts to glorify the deeds of the heroic builders of communism.[23]

Before proceeding to discuss other important events in the field of Soviet literature during the first part of 1957, it would be advisable to follow the summary of these speeches with an account of the manner in which they were received by Soviet writers in general. The speeches were first printed in an August issue of Kommunist and in Pravda on August 28, 1957. Meetings of writers were held following the publication of these speeches in order to discuss their content and significance. As was to be expected, on the surface all writers were unanimous in the view that the speeches were of tremendous importance to all workers in the arts. The following examples are but a few of those which could be cited as

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23 Ibid., pp. 25, 26, and 32.

proof that Khrushchev's views were received with a display of enthusiasm on the part of Soviet men of letters.

V. Kataev declared Khrushchev's speeches to be "a document of tremendous and fundamental importance. They are a guide to action, determining the general trend of our literature and art."[24] A. Iashin, who wrote the book, Rychagi (Levers), which was condemned by the Party, proclaimed his support for the Khrushchev theories on art in the following terms:

> N. S. Khrushchev's ideas regarding the inseparable concepts of Party spirit and folk quality are very close and understandable to me. If one does not think about the good of the people, then why write, and for whom? The intent of the entire work of the Communist Party is to create new and better conditions of existence on earth for man. This means that a Soviet writer who expresses the thoughts and aspirations of his people can follow no other path but one together with the Communist Party. And, conversely: "He who stands firmly on Party positions will always be with the people." This is very dear and near to me.[25]

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24 Pravda, October 3, 1957; cond. and trans. in CDSP, IX (40) (November 13, 1957), 11.

25 Ibid., 13.

In an article in Pravda in December, 1957, A Surkov criticized those who had tried "to cast doubt on the principle of Party spirit" and declared that all Soviet writers were completely behind the Party view on literature as espoused by Khrushchev:

> In his speeches, Comrade N. S. Khrushchev generalized and developed the main principles of Party policy in the realm of literature and art and emphasized that the Party has always considered and still considers literature and art to be an inseparable part of the general struggle for communism. ...
>
> Our country's creative intelligentsia greeted the appearance of this most important Party document enthusiastically and unanimously approved and supported the ideas expressed in it.[26]

Khrushchev's speeches were intended as a consolidating and cementing force in bringing all Soviet writers back into the fold of socialist realism with its Party spirit. The many statements of support by Soviet literary figures lent support to the belief that this purpose had been achieved. However, continued

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26 Pravda, December 1, 1957; cond. and trans. in CDSP, IX (48) (January 8, 1958), 10.

emphasis on the necessity to fight departures from the method of socialist realism gave the impression that everything was still not in order in the literary sphere.

With reference again to the first half of 1957, two other important events that took place and had later repercussions in the Soviet literary field were the speeches by Dmitri Shepilov, Soviet foreign minister at that time, to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Artists in March and to the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers in April. Shepilov had considerable experience in Communist theorizing and in ideological matters generally. Some years earlier he had worked in the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Party Central Committee, later became chief editor of Pravda, and his appointment to the foreign minister's post was probably only a temporary measure. At any rate his previous activities in ideological affairs perhaps prompted the Party to choose him to state an official

policy towards the arts at these meetings. A brief account of the content of his speeches is necessary in order to understand important later developments in the literary field.

At the Congress of Artists Shepilov praised Soviet realist art, ridiculed modern art in the West, and asserted that the method of socialist realism permitted the greatest development of the artist's creative individuality. However, he also stated significantly that

> it would be wrong to regard the mere fact that an artist has chosen a topical theme as incontestable proof of the ties between his creative work and politics, between his work and life. It would be just as wrong and ridiculous to declare a superbly executed landscape as a work divorced from politics or lacking in ideas.[27]

He maintained that an attitude of this kind was an oversimplification, for, "in politics, in life and in art everything is much more complicated."[28] The reader could loosely interpret this to mean that writers were to have

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27 Pravda and Izvestiia, March 3, 1957; trans. in CDSP, X (9) (April 10, 1957), 21.

28 Ibid.

more freedom and scope in choosing topics and in their various approaches to these topics. A more tolerant attitude towards men of the arts is also vaguely discernable in Shepilov's following statements:

> We are severely intolerant of everything connected with the influence of reactionary ideology, the theory of "pure art," indifference to politics and absence of ideas, and all these influences are also reflected in the sphere of art forms. But this has nothing to do with attempts arbitrarily and without reason to impoverish, level and restrict the framework of Soviet art. By its very nature socialist realism calls for a bold and resolute struggle for variety in art, for a wealth of artistic phenomena, methods, devices and styles, provided they serve the people and provided the artist presents us with works that enrich and beautify the life of the people and not with thistles and weeds, much less poisonous plants.[29]

The Party later maintained that Shepilov, while criticizing foreign art, said little about Lenin and the necessity for partiinost' in Soviet art. This contention is partially true.

Shepilov's speech at the composers' gathering was

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29 Ibid.

much the same in tone. He praised the great masters of music and declared that their everlasting popularity was due to the fact that their music was close to the people; he criticized the modernist trend in western music as a manifestation of the general decay of the western world; he praised the achievements of Soviet music but warned that more attention would have to be paid aesthetic teaching in the schools since it was at present unsatisfactory; however, as in his other speech, he also stuck to his theme that a variety of artistic views was desirable:

> ...While combating factional one-sidedness, it is necessary to respect different artistic views, tastes, and strivings which are developing on the basis of socialist realism. It would be monstrously absurd to propagate under the slogan of struggle for creative unity a leveling of talents, styles, manners or coloring. Every artist contributes <u>his own</u> to the world picture created by art. Each real artist has his own creative manner, and the utmost support of the individuality of each artist should help to enrich music as a whole.[30]

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30 <u>Pravda</u> and <u>Izvestiia</u>, April 4, 1957; trans. in <u>CDSP</u>, X(13) (May 8, 1957),21.

In June, 1957, a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Party disclosed the presence of an anti-Party group of plotters in the high offices of the Party; Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov were accused of being the main offenders. All four, (later Bulganin was also linked with the plotters), were condemned for opposing Party decisions with respect to the decentralization of industry, the new agricultural measures, and the more flexible foreign policy; Shepilov was subsequently also censured for the specific crime of fostering a liberalism in the arts and of playing down the Leninist principle of Party literature.

A very important article in a July issue of Kommunist, titled "For Leninist Adherence to Principle in Questions of Literature and the Arts", declared:

> Shepilov, whom the Party now knows to be a factionalist who sided with the anti-Party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov, bears a tremendous share of the responsibility for the spread of unsound tendencies among a part of the art intelligentsia. At the helm of the ideological sphere, Shepilov betrayed the trust of the Central Committee. He

> retreated from the line charted by the 20th Party Congress in questions of literature and the arts and took a liberal position that was at variance with Leninist adherence to principle. He was also two-faced in questions of art. In public statements and especially in his practical work he tolerated the unsound tendencies of some writers and art figures. Seeking personal popularity, he began to flirt with demagogues and tried to implement a platform "wider" than that of the Party. Shepilov made pretenses of speaking from Party positions for giving free scope to the activities of the art intelligentsia, ignoring the fundamental demands on the ideological and artistic standard of creative work and implacability toward everything alien. Here he radically diverged from the line of the Party and its Central Committee. In reality, Shepilov did not stand for genuine freedom of creative work but made concessions to anarchic elements.
>
> Highly indicative of Shepilov's positions are his speeches to the artists' and composers' congresses. ...[31]

A correct understanding of what is meant by the term liberalism with respect to the arts is both interesting and important in understanding official Soviet attitudes towards literature. In essence liberal-

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31 Kommunist, No. 10 (July, 1957), 13-22; cond. and trans. in CDSP, IX (33) (September 25, 1957), 4.

ism means the permitting of works of art which, though they may deal with working-class themes and sympathize with this class, nevertheless are lacking in open Party militancy. The Party held the view that only avowedly Party-inspired writing should be encouraged and no tolerance should be shown any other kind.

By mid-1957, following official declarations that liberalism had been eradicated from among representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia, a new and even more dangerous trend appeared on the Soviet literary scene--revisionism. Revisionism, as defined in Soviet circles, is the revising of basic Marxist-Leninist teachings; with respect to literature, for example, a call for replacing realist writings or for abolishing partiinost' would be tantamount to revisionism. This evil had been declared the principle danger following the break between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1948. The latter country had erroneously proclaimed its own "road to socialism", a road which differed from the one being followed by the Soviet Union.

Soviet literary critics stated that foreign political revisionism had been followed by literary revisionism. This anti-Soviet heresy has continued up to the present day to be one of the major crimes that Soviet writers could be guilty of.

On February 8, 1958, the Central Committee of the Party held a reception in the Kremlin for representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia. Party Secretary Khrushchev spoke at this gathering. He praised the great achievements of Soviet scientists, such as the sputniks, and declared these accomplishments to prove that Soviet society provides the most fertile ground for the development of the people's creative abilities. After mentioning the great progress that was being made in all fields in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev made reference to the "cult" period and revisionist tendencies:

> Our creative intelligentsia, as life itself has shown, has manifested its high ideological maturity and correctly understood the complex questions connected with the Party's struggle to overcome the consequences of the cult of the individual

> leader. It is true that individual writers had certain waverings. In frank talks at the previous reception [Khrushchev's previously discussed speeches] we advised these comrades to sweep aside false conceptions, to reflect critically on the fabrications of the revisionists and to study life more deeply in order to understand Soviet reality and its social laws. After all, life in its continuous development is the best school and the best confirmation of the profound correctness of the Communist Party policy.[32]

The fourth plenary session of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union which was held in February, 1958, was an event of considerable significance in the Soviet literary field. At this session N. S. Tikhonov, Secretary of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union, echoed the Khrushchev statements in summoning writers to display partiinost' in their works and combat revisionism:

> The Party spirit of our literature and the militant tendentiousness of the struggle for communism that unites our literature do not put all writers on the same level, do not deprive them of their individual talents and do not impose obstacles and limits to their choice of genre, theme or problem. This requires no demonstration to the people

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32 Pravda and Izvestiia, February 9, 1958; trans. in CDSP, X (6) (March 19, 1958), 4.

who read our books. ...

> Not a great deal of time has passed since the third plenary session [May, 1957]. But in that time the atmosphere of our literary life has become remarkably clear and healthy. Writers from among all the Soviet peoples are unanimous in their striving to respond to the support given them and the faith shown them by the Party and the people with new works that are ideologically and artistically perfect.[33]

On August 27, 1958, Izvestiia published an article by A. Zis, in which the author made a detailed attack on revisionist tendencies in the arts. He censured the demands, prevalent at that time in Polish, Yugoslav, and Hungarian literary circles, that Party spirit in literature as well as the whole method of socialist realism, which had in their view been imposed on the men of the arts by Stalin, should be abolished. He criticized the view that realism should be replaced by modernist literary trends and that Party guidance of literature be done away with. He argued that Party

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33 Pravda, February 12, 1957; cond. and trans. in CDSP, X (7) (March 28, 1957), 37.

spirit was the essence of socialist literature, that socialist realism was not in fact a creation of Stalin but was formulated by Gorky, Maiakovsky, A. Tolstoy, Fadeev, and others, that Party guidance was necessary in art as it provided required force and vitality, and that the replacing of realism would be a negation of Marxist aesthetics--in his view, Marxism regards art as a reflection of life and is not concerned with the subjectivist expression of the artists's own sentiments.[34]

In October, 1958, after things appeared to have calmed down somewhat because of the violent attacks made on literary revisionism, a great furore suddenly broke loose following the awarding of a Nobel Prize for literature to B. Pasternak. His novel, Doctor Zhivago, which all Soviet officialdom censured in the most heated manner as openly anti-Soviet, had been sent abroad for publication by the author during the period of relaxation in 1956 evidently with the intention of having it published

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34 Izvestiia, August 27, 1958; trans in CDSP, X (34) (October 1, 1958), 9-11.

simultaneously in Italy and in the Soviet Union. When the Party subsequently expressed severe objections to the novel Pasternak attempted to prevent its publication in Italy but failed. He was ostensibly awarded the Nobel Prize for his lyrical poetry but one can surmise that this book, which was incidentally highly praised by the permanent secretary of the Royal Swedish Academy, was probably a factor that was taken into account when the choice was being made.

The merits and shortcomings of Doctor Zhivago will not be discussed in this work as the books of Ehrenburg, Panova, Dudintsev, Ovechkin, and Kochetov, which have already been dealt with, provide sufficient material for understanding Soviet literary attitudes and policies during the post-Stalin period. However, it would be of interest to follow events which occurred after Pasternak was named winner of this award. Both Pasternak and the Nobel Prize were denounced in Pravda and immediately thereafter the author was divested of the name of Soviet writer and expelled from the USSR Writers' Union. This action was certainly very serious

as it meant his virtual ostracism from the Soviet writing colony, and also that his subsequent writings would not be accepted by any publisher. A general meeting of Moscow writers unanimously supported the action taken by the Writers' Union. The secretary of the Komsomol, at a meeting of this organization, proposed that Pasternak be allowed to go abroad and receive his award and that he stay in the West permanently. Only a few days later Pasternak, who had originally accepted the prize, in a letter to Khrushchev personally which was published in Pravda and Izvestiia, expressed his apologies for the trouble he had caused, declared his voluntary rejection of the Nobel Prize, and begged that he be allowed to stay in the Soviet Union. In the same issue of these newspapers, the Soviet news agency, TASS, declared that no obstacles would be put in Pasternak's way if he wished to go abroad. The writer then made a public apology for having written such a book.

He did not leave the Soviet Union and died there recently. The Pasternak case illustrates the serious predicament that a Soviet writer can find himself in and the considerable pressure that the authorities can bring to bear on him should he write a book which is declared to be hostile to the Soviet system.

After the events concerning Pasternak had receded into the background, the year 1958 concluded with a continued concentration on the fight against revisionism. This theme occupied a prominent place in discussions held during the First Congress of Writers of the Russian Republic in December, 1958. Of particular importance was one passage of the resolution, adopted by the Congress:

> ...writers of Soviet Russia will always resolutely rebuff all attacks by revisionism and bourgeois ideology. None of the machinations of the foreign revisionists are capable of discrediting the proved principles of socialist realism, on the basis of which brilliant works of art have been created in Soviet and world literature. ...[35]

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35 Izvestiia, December 14, 1958; exc. and trans. in CDSP, X (50) (January 21, 1959), 48.

Conclusion

Two particular periods are roughly discernable when one undertakes to summarize Soviet literary policies during the years 1957 and 1958.

The period of so-called liberalism in the arts existed during the first half of 1957. There were definitely more controls on literature during this time than had been the case during most of 1956. However, one gets the impression that Shepilov, in his capacity as the formulator of an ideologically correct policy towards the arts, although tightening the reins to some extent, since an action of this kind was required if Soviet writers were to be kept in line in the future, nevertheless did not favour a return to the strict policies which were in effect prior to 1953. In point of fact, it is doubtful whether the body of Soviet writers could have been forced back into this rigid mold after having experienced a brief period of limited freedom in their works and opinions. Thus,

Shepilov, in the name of the Party, increased the literary controls but in a gradual, restrained way, and in his statements he toned down reference to Leninist partiinost' in literature.

One could consider the second period to have begun with N. S. Khrushchev's speeches to the writers in May, 1957. As has been pointed out in this chapter, these speeches stressed the need for writers to stand on Party positions and therefore designated renewed Party pressure in the literary field. Following the censure and rout of the so-called dogmatists of the anti-Party group, their opposite numbers, the revisionists, again became the chief object of attack. The term "literary revisionism" was henceforth attached to all writers who did not write as the Party wished. This period of a return to strict Party guidance in the literary sphere is still in existence at the present time; it has been marked by many speeches and articles on the part of Party and literary leaders on the necessity of writers to adhere to the Party line and fight against alien and decadent outside influences.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Post-Stalin Policies and Trends in the Literary Field

Soviet policies in the literary field during the years 1953-1958 have, as in other fields, been marked by instability. A periodic tightening and loosening of official pressures, in the nature of Party demands made on Soviet writers, was the case during the whole history of Soviet literature prior to Stalin's death; this fact has been pointed out in the introduction. This vacillating policy has continued in force in the post-Stalin period. The following paragraphs include a summary of policy changes that were made and trends that appeared during this period together with this writer's explanations of the motivations which prompted them.

Two rather distinct periods, in which a limited amount of freedom in the literary field existed following 1953, are readily discernible. The first of these periods began in the second half of 1953 and was marked by the appearance of some articles and works

which were not to the liking of official circles; this state of affairs gave rise to a period of increasing criticism, which succeeded in silencing the new voices to a considerable extent. The lid was effectively clamped down on most free thinking by the end of 1954. The second period broke forth following the Twentieth Congress of the Party in February, 1956, and lasted until N. S. Khrushchev made his famous speeches to the writers in May, 1957, in which he pointed up the necessity for writers to conform to Party standards and thus be close to the people. In order to understand the causes for these two important periods in Soviet literature, it is necessary to recall to mind the state of Soviet society and the political events which took place during these years, things which directly resulted in the policies towards literature.

Just prior to Stalin's death the screws of authority had been tightened almost to the breaking point. Following the leader's death, his heirs, unquestionably in a state of great anxiety, were desirous

of getting through the initially difficult and uncertain period without any outbursts of the pent-up forces with which Soviet society was pregnant. A continuity, a transfer of loyalties to the new "collective leadership", and a calming down of the restless forces, were clearly required, and with this aim in mind various important changes were made; in agriculture, a better deal was given to collective-farmers, in industry, stress was shifted to the production of consumer goods, and, perhaps most significant of all, the master policeman, Beria, was executed and the personal security of Soviet citizens was guaranteed against any future violations of "socialist legality."

A summary of the struggle that took place between Khrushchev and Malenkov during the post-Stalin years will be included at this point because of the decided effect it had on Soviet policies in general. Malenkov's call for more satirical works in Soviet literature at the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952 ran counter to the previous harsh policy of Zhdanov and gave the former the appearance

of being a "liberalizer". It is a fact that following the death of Stalin, Malenkov was the favourite of the writers, while Khrushchev, except for his measures for improving the lot of the collective-farmers, adhered to the Stalinist policy in other fields and thus was generally regarded as being conservative-minded. During these years the Party had steered a middle course between revisionism, espousing change from the past, and so-called dogmatism, which was characterized by an "isolation from life" and a reliance on old, outdated formulas. Following Malenkov's resignation as Premier in early 1955 and his subsequent alliance with the arch-Stalinists Molotov and Kaganovich, Khrushchev attempted to become the "liberalizer". His speech in 1956 was partly intended for this purpose and lent support to the revisionists. However, as things went badly in Poland and Hungary, the old group, the "dogmatists," achieved a favoured position. After the routing of the "dogmatists" of the anti-Party group in June, 1957, the revisionists possibly felt that a new, freer climate was in store;

however, Khrushchev's speech in July 1957, did not substantiate this optimistic view. The Party Secretary stressed the need to fight revisionism in all its forms and thus prevented any repetition of the unfortunate state of affairs of 1956.

Now let us return to literary developments in the period immediately following Stalin's death. The new, relatively-liberal Party approach to the various classes of Soviet citizenry quite naturally extended to the intelligentsia, a class which had major grievances to make against the regimentation and control which it had experienced especially during the post-war period. The impoverishment of Soviet literature as a result of the restrictions was evident to all, including the Party leaders, and thus the call by official literary circles, obviously under Party direction, for Soviet writers to criticize shortcomings in Soviet reality and portray more human and lifelike characters in their works. Two other factors played some part in literary developments at this time. The gradual expanding of

cultural contacts with the West, and following Khrushchev's 1956 speech, an acceleration of this process, resulted in a freer exchange of opinions and ideas among intellectuals. However, although this exchange had some effect on Soviet men of letters, the knowledge of the ever-present Party authority and the deep-rooted demand for uniformity in thought, a view inherent in the totalitarian system, prevented any fundamental change in the path of Soviet literature. The rehabilitation of various writers such as M. Koltsov, and later B. Iasensky, Isaak Babel', and Iurii Olesha, and the great Russian novelist, Fedor Dostoevsky, was certainly a sign of some lessening in pressures. With regard to Dostoevsky, the new official view was to the effect that although he suffered from ideological weaknesses, nevertheless his heart was on "the right side":

> ...He felt deeply for the downtrodden, he had no use for capitalist civilization, he mercilessly exposed the pitfalls of bourgeois individualism and the degrading impact of money.[1]

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1 Victor Erlich, "Soviet Literary Criticism: Past and Present," Problems of Communism, No. 1 (January-February, 1958), VII, 41.

These circumstances provided the "go-ahead" signal for Soviet writers to write more in the manner they wished and they took good advantage of it. This marked the beginning of the first period of limited freedom of creativity. A trend of going too far in breaking with the past was manifested, a fact which was the result of the following two circumstances: firstly, it was an understandable reaction against the previous period with its choking restrictions, and secondly, it arose due to the vagueness as to where the bounds of the new limited freedom lay, as indecision characterized Party policies in all fields at this time. In the main body of this work, Pomerantsev's article "On Sincerity in Literature" and the books I. Ehrenburg's The Thaw and V. Panova's The Seasons have been used as examples in illustrating the Party's dissatisfaction with, and condemnation of, overly-critical writers at this time. A brief account of the content and a discussion of the specific criticisms of these literary productions were given in order to explain the reasons for the Party's attitude. However,

even though the considerably critical type of writing was censured and abated somewhat for the sake of expediency during 1955, no writers really expected a return to the harsh controls extant in the zhdanovshchina period.

In 1956 the ennunciated policy of de-Stalinization resulted in a second outpouring of critical writings. Khrushchev's statements to the effect that considerable harm had been done literature because of the cult led Soviet writers to mistakenly believe that wide literary freedom was finally in the offing. Calls were made for liberalizing the strict limits of socialist realism in some cases and in others demands went so far as to advocate the complete abolition of this method. Thus, an even more outspoken trend was manifested in this period than had been the case during 1954. The appearance of such works as Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone made the Party extremely nervous over the situation getting out of hand. Through its criticism of the Stalin cult, the Party had in effect widened the creative possibilities

for writers, it had relaxed its vigilance; however, the Party now believed that many of the writers had taken advantage of its good intentions.

A new tightening of literary controls began to be felt during the first months of 1957. Dmitri Shepilov, to whom the Party had delegated responsibility for official artistic policies at this time, called for more positive and less critical thinking on the part of the men of the arts. It was Khrushchev, however, the same man who had inadvertently been the cause of the unfortunate, in Party eyes, state of affairs, who firmly and decisively stepped in to put an end to the period of limited freedom of artistic expression. His important speeches on the arts in May, 1957, had this effect. So upset was he over the rigidity of the views which some writers clung to that it is said he actually threatened the non-conforming writers with physical punishment;[2] a threat of this kind

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2 Edward Crankshaw, Khrushchev's Russia (Baltimore, 1959), p. 121.

had not been made since the days of Stalin. The charge of fostering a liberalist tendency in the arts was officially laid at Shepilov's doorstep following Khrushchev's disclosure of an anti-Party group in the hierarchy of the Party.

So-called literary revisionism, which was labelled a foreign phenomenon, became the chief object of criticism among official literary circles following the eclipse of Shepilov's liberalism. The increased pressure for conformity and the unknown dangers involved in any deviation from the Party standards had the desired effect at least on the surface of re-establishing the obedience and orthodox Party-mindedness among Soviet literary men. However, some writers still braved the dangers. For example, Il'ia Ehrenburg's article, "The Lessons of Stendhal", continued the undersirable approach. On the surface Ehrenburg was speaking of the French writer Stendhal's ideas and of conditions in early nineteenth century France; however, he undoubtedly

intended his article to apply to the atmosphere in the Soviet Union. The article criticized tyranny in the most outspoken terms, in effect refuted the Khrushchev theory that the "cult of the individual leader" alone was responsible for the evils that had crept into Soviet society, and declared the necessity for a writer to create spontaneously, from his heart, from his inspiration, in order to be truthful:

> He [Stendhal] hated despotism and despised toadyism: "Even if a king is an angel, his government will destroy art--not by forbidding the subject of a picture, but by breaking the artist's spirit."
>
> ...The crux of the matter is not the tyrant personally but the nature of tyranny. A tyrant can be intelligent or stupid, good or evil, but all the same he is all-powerful and powerless; he is frightened by conspiracies, he is flattered and deceived; the jails fill up; cowardly hypocrites whisper, and a silence sets in that is enough to stop the heart. ...
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> He [Stendhal] said that all unhappiness is the result of falsehood. For him the writer's work was to serve the truth. He wanted to reconcile truthfulness with the freedom that he felt was inseparable from human happiness.[3]

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3 Inostrannaia literatura, No. 6 (June, 1957), 199-212; cond. and trans. in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, hereafter cited as CDSP, IX (33) (September 25, 1957), 12 and 14.

This article occupied a similar position in the second period of relaxation as Pomerantsev's article had done in the first. The views expressed were also much the same.

Literaturnaia gazeta, in emphatically censuring the article, contained the following criticism:

> ...To consider "inspiration" or, in other words, the artist's skill and talent as something quite the opposite of a "literary school," i.e., a system of esthetic views, is to deprive art of its ideological content and the creative process of its materialistic nature.[4]

The new hard line was further emphasized by Khrushchev in his interview with the American correspondent, Henry Shapiro, on November 14, 1957. His statements were reminiscent of those expressed by Zhdanov a decade earlier. Upon being asked about the possibility for various Soviet literary schools in the future, Khrushchev declared that since there were no antagonistic classes in Soviet society, only one literary method was necessary to satisfy the common interests of all Soviet people (the method of socialist realism).

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4 Literaturnaia gazeta, August 22, 1957; trans. in CDSP, IX (33) (September 25, 1957), 14.

In addition, he stated significantly: "It is not without reason..that writers in our country are called engineers of the human soul;"[5] a clearly Stalinist statement of this kind had not been uttered since the zhdanovshchina period.

Thus, the year 1958 came to a close with the leading figures of Soviet literature calling on their colleagues to be vigilant against revisionist tendencies, to always be guided by the Leninist principles in their works, and to create true pictures of the new Soviet man.

Overall Pattern of Policy

A clearly-visible, overall pattern of Soviet policy in the literary sphere has been suggested in this work. It consists of three phases. Firstly, controls are relaxed and demands on writers are decreased as

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5 Pravda and Izvestiia, November 19, 1957; trans. in CDSP, IX (46) (December 25, 1957), 4.

a result either of political changes which make a concession of this nature advisable, or after a lengthy period in which writers have demonstrated their obedience, thus impressing the Party with a sense of confidence that writers, if given more creative freedom, will use it in the proper way. Secondly, controls are tightened but not to the same degree; the Party acts in this way when writers fail to include sufficient partiinost' in their writings following a relaxation. Thirdly, a stabilization process takes place in which the newly-set standards, effected by the increase in pressures, are propagandized among the whole body of writers, which must then take a positive view of them; in effect, this phase designates a remobilization of all writers in the service of the Party, a marshalling of all literary forces behind the Leninist principles.

As we have seen, during the 1953-1958 period, these cycles of three stages have occurred twice. The first cycle encompassed the period from late 1953 to February, 1956. The period of relaxation began in late 1953, when the first new-type, unsatisfactory writings began to

appear, and lasted until mid-1954, which marked the start of the attacks on errant writers. The period of tightening extended from mid-1954 to December, 1954, when a new strong line was proclaimed at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers. The stabilization phase took place throughout 1955 and ended in February, 1956; this was a period in which writers appeared to have resigned themselves to, and settled into, the new, official, more restrictive situation. The second cycle took place in the following manner. The period of relaxation was in existence from February, 1956, when Khrushchev made his famous speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, to late November, 1956, following the events in Poland and Hungary and the calls for the abolition of Party guidance in literature. The period of tightening extended from November, 1956 to May, 1957, when Khrushchev made his speeches to the writers on the necessity for close ties with the life of the people. The period of stabilization, beginning in May, 1957, has continued in force up to the present time; during this stage writers were commanded to be on guard against revisionist tendencies and to unite closely around the Party.

In this writer's view Soviet literature has been undergoing a stabilization process for the last three years, and this state is likely to continue for some time in the future. The following discussion of events which occurred in the literary field during the first half of 1959 will illustrate the continuation of the state of affairs extant during 1957 and 1958.

Looking to the Future

The announcement of the new Seven-Year Plan (1959-1965) at the Extraordinary Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in January, 1959, was of great significance to every Soviet citizen. During the Congress statements concerning the Party's future demands on literature and the arts were made by E. Furtseva and M. Suslov, members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Party. Furtseva called on writers to

> present in their books a worthy image of the life of the heroic Soviet people, their fiery revolutionary energy, the great transformations in town and country and the fine moral nature of the new man who is building communism, and to show how the survivals of the past are being

overcome in the minds of people.[6]

Suslov, the chief Party theoretician on ideological matters, applauded the writers for rebuffing revisionism and praised their recent literary productions:

> ...Many recent works of literature and art which have gained public recognition raise important contemporary issues. In these works the hero is the advanced man of our times, the creator of a new life, the builder of communism. The efforts of artists to record in their works the profound changes and the remarkable new processes which have been under way in the life of the Soviet people in recent years deserve the fullest measure of support.[7]

Soviet men of letters were called on to reflect in their works the glorious deeds of workers in performing the tasks of the new Seven-Year Plan. The reliance on such a restrictive theme, recalling the RAPP period with its regimentation and the resultant mediocrity of literary production, was evidently not to the liking of some writers. Those who wished to choose non-contemporary subjects as the themes of their works held the view that it was necessary to delve into past happenings if one wanted to explain the present effectively. This so-called "theory of distance" was

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6 Pravda and Izvestiia, January 30, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (6-7) (March 18, 1959), 9-10.

7 Pravda and Izvestiia, January 31, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (8) (March 25, 1959), 23-24.

condemned as an attempt to avoid writing on the contemporary feats of Soviet workers. A Pravda editorial heatedly condemned attempts to shy away from the suggested theme and declared:

> Nothing limits the writer's opportunity to portray our times, which provide a great multiplicity of the most diverse themes. But their chief themes, interesting all the people and determining the development of literature, are those connected with the period of extensive construction of Communism. It is this most important task that held the focus of attention at the writers' congresses held in all our republics. It is important that the preparation for the Third All-Union Writers' Congress also be keyed to the spirit of the tasks set by the 21st Party Congress, the spirit of our times.
>
> The construction projects of the seven-year plan await the writers.[8]

A. Surkov's report to the Third Congress of Writers in May, 1959, was an event of considerable importance inasmuch as it voiced the Party view on literary matters. The Board Secretary of the Writers'

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8 Pravda, April 1, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (13) (April 29, 1959), 34.

Union praised works that had appeared in recent years such as Ovechkin's A Difficult Spring and Kochetov's The Ershov Brothers, criticized the revisionists, the "theory of distance" and the "no-conflict" theory, called on writers to strengthen their ties with the people and create lifelike pictures of the new Soviet man, and paid tribute to the Party's role in literary affairs:

> On behalf of all the delegates to the Third Congress and all Soviet writers, allow me to express warm thanks to the Communist Party, to its Leninist Central Committee and to the First Secretary of the Party Central Committee, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, for the strong ideological helping hand they extended to all the artistic intelligentsia, and to us writers above all, in the struggle against the revisionists.[9]

Two changes were made in the statutes of the Union of Writers at this Congress. Firstly, in respect to the definition of socialist realism, the words "historically concrete", which had been deleted at the Second Congress for no apparent reason, were again

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9 Pravda, May 19, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (20) (June 17, 1959), 9.

added, so that the definition read as before, "a correct, historically-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development"; in addition to this change the definition was augmented with new clauses concerning partiinost', "the supreme expression of identification with the people", and narodnost', "literature's ties with the people's life."[10] This latter addition was almost certainly inspired by Khrushchev's "on Party positions" speech on the arts.

Secondly, a change was made in the Union's administrative organs in which the Presidium of the Union, which, prior to this time had relatively few duties, was abolished. Thenceforth, the Board of the Union and its secretariat were to administer literary affairs in the intervals between congresses. Members' admission into, and expulsion from, the USSR Writers' Union, which was previously a duty of the Presidium of the

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10 Literaturnaia gazeta, May 22, 1959; cond. and trans. in CDSP, XI (23) (July 8, 1959), 13.

USSR Writers' Union, was to be handled by the Presidia and Bureaus of the Boards of the republican Writers' Unions. This move could be interpreted as a decentralization of authority in the literary sphere following the general line taken by Khrushchev several years before in his reorganization and decentralization of the national economy.

The First Party Secretary even participated in the proceedings. He triumphantly announced the victory of Soviet writers over the revisionists:

> Comrades, I should like to make a few further remarks which concern the characterization of the recent past. The aftermath of the struggle which not very long ago bore a rather acute nature is still making itself felt among you. This was an ideological struggle of principle with the revisionists who tried to launch assaults on the Party line. The entire community of writers rose in resistance to these assaults. The overwhelming majority of the writers offered determined opposition to the bearers of revisionist views.[11]

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11 Pravda and Izvestiia, May 24, 1959; trans. in CDSP, XI (21) (June 24, 1959), 5.

The message from the writers to the Central Committee of the Party expressed heart-felt gratitude to the Party for its "paternal" advice, and to Khrushchev personally, for the interest he had displayed and was continuing to display in literary affairs:

> When the Party has paternally, directly and justly criticized this or that among us, our shortcomings and errors, we have always felt behind this criticism a concern for our literature and a faith in our strength and in our desire to follow the path laid down by the Party and to be its true helpers. ...
>
> We have been given a good example to emulate in our work, the example of selfless and intelligent labor for the good of the people, of principled and courageous struggle for the victory of communism that is daily presented to us by thousands of Party workers, beginning with Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Party Central Committee, a truly untiring laborer who before our eyes has accomplished in these years what others could not have accomplished in a whole generation.
>
> We are deeply touched by the way in which Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev spoke to us here, delving into our affairs deeply and in a friendly spirit--that he talked to us so openly, directly and candidly, as one talks to comrades at work.[12]

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12 Pravda, May 24, 1959; exc. and trans, in CDSP, XI (22) (July 1, 1959), 13.

Thus, from the foregoing it appears on the surface at least that writers have been effectively brought together into one Party-devoted unit whose main task is to glorify the deeds of the new Seven-Year Plan.

Opinions among western scholars as to the prospects of Soviet literature vary considerably. Gleb Struve, Tom Scriven, and Maurice Friedberg are all rather pessimistic about the possibility of more freedom being given Soviet writers, and feel that the new hard line with its renewed emphasis on Party spirit in literature is likely to continue indefinitely.[13] George Gibian is more optimistic and gives as his reason the fact that provocative and daring books and articles still appear, even though they are less sharp in their criticisms.[14] A most optimistic view of the future developments of Soviet literature is held by Max Hayward. He believes that Khrushchev's speech at the Third Congress of Soviet Writers contained statements to the

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13 Check bibliography for reference to articles of Struve, Scriven, and Friedberg, containing this view.

14 Check bibliography for reference to article of Gibian.

effect that in the future the Party would leave Soviet writers on their own to settle their controversies among themselves. The Party Secretary had also told writers that there would be no return to the restrictions of the "cult" period. Furthermore, in Hayward's view, the fact that the newly-elected secretariat of the Writers' Union was composed of liberal-minded writers as well as Party spokesmen, and that Konstantin Fedin, a writer of integrity and tolerance, replaced the Party-hack, A. Surkov, as Secretary of the Board of the Writers' Union, promised only good for the future. Hayward states:

> It seems highly likely that under this new leadership there may at last appear in the Soviet Union some literary works of lasting and distinctive artistic quality.[15]

It is the author's view that some time in the future there will probably be another lessening of the pressures in the literary field such as those that took place in 1954 and 1956. When and why it will occur cannot be foreseen. However, one can surmise that when the relax-

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15 Max Hayward, "Soviet Literature in the Doldrums," Problems of Communism, No. 4 (July-August, 1959), VIII, 16.

ation of controls does come, Soviet political developments will play a major role in the process.

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